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A Quarterly Review

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SCRUTINY

A Quarterly Review

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CONTENTS

TOWARDS A CONCEPTION OF MUSICAL TRADITION (I):
MELODY AND TEXTURE, MEDIAEVAL AND MODERN, by *W. H. Mellers* *Page* 2

FAREWELL AND WELCOME: A SEQUENCE OF POEMS, by *Ronald Bottrall* 17

A CASE FOR KIPLING? by *Boris Ford* 23

DEMIGODS AND PICKPOCKETS:
THE AUGUSTAN MYTH IN SWIFT AND ROUSSEAU, by *J. C. Maxwell* 34

'MEASURE FOR MEASURE', by *D. A. Traversi* 40

COMMENTS AND REVIEWS 59

ELIOT'S LATER POETRY, *The Dry Salvages* reviewed by F. R. Leavis (p. 60). AN AMERICAN CRITIC, Edmund Wilson's *The Wound and the Bow* reviewed by F.R.L. (p. 72). GRAMOPHONE RECORDS, *Byrd: Mass for Five Voices* and *Recital of Russian Songs* reviewed by W. H. Mellers (p. 73). JOHNSON, *The Poems of Samuel Johnson* reviewed by F.R.L. (p. 75). *Ruins and Warnings*, Stephen Spender's *Ruins and Visions* and Henry Treece's *Invitation and Warning* reviewed by D. J. Enright (p. 78).

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TOWARDS A CONCEPTION OF MUSICAL TRADITION (I):

MELODY AND TEXTURE, MEDIÆVAL AND MODERN[1]

I.

IT is difficult to know anything about the origins of musical speech because it is difficult to define what precisely we mean by music. A musical sound, we say, is associated with regular periodic vibration; a noise with irregular vibration: yet probably in most organized music-forms noise has a place, and we speak commonly of the 'music' of the wind and of streams, not to mention singing birds. Do we mean that in these instances the noise is somehow ordered and if so ordered by what? Or are we merely using language metaphorically? I think we have to recognize that distinctions between a noise and a musical sound can only be arbitrary, that the boundaries between the tolerable and the intolerable are elastic, shifting with successive ages of the life of man; that music is bound to be conventional to a degree and that only the composer or the social group of which he is a part can decide where the borderline between the naturalistic and the conventional is to come. Probably the only physical laws which are unanswerable and unalterable are those few primary ones on which melodic construction, in the music of all ages and civilizations, is based, and those laws are, roughly speaking, those implicit in the human voice. The melody of the human voice would therefore seem to be the very essence of the art of music: whether metrical rhythm —the beating of toms-toms, etc.—' came first ' or not doesn't really effect the issue since rhythm in itself, though it may ' express ' emotion of a sort, does so in a manner that is as completely sensory and nervous as, and no more inherently musical than, the effect on the nervous system of, say, a rocking chair or the dentist's drill. (True musical rhythm—Saint Augustine's *ars bene movendi*, as distinct from metrical accent—is of course included within 'melody' since a succession of tones in time becomes melody only when it entails a significant interaction of movement and repose).

Many theorists have held that the human speaking voice is the root of musical expression. That very remarkable Czech composer Leos Janácek believed this, and would wander about the countryside listening not only to the cries of birds and beasts, the ripple of streams and the whining of wind, but above all to the voices of the peasants, the different rhythmic and tonal traits they assumed under

[1] *Music in the Middle Ages*, by Gustave Reese (Dent, 26/3).

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the stress of varying emotions. ' The study which I have made,' he writes, ' of the musical aspects of the spoken language has led me to the conviction that all the melodic and rhythmic mysteries of music can be explained by reference to the melody and rhythm of the musical motives of the spoken language '; and of his own music one can certainly say that it is passionately moving because it is a sublimation, though not merely an imitation, of the precise modulations of the human voice when it speaks in anger or love or fear or any other emotion to which human beings are susceptible. I do not myself believe, as Janácek did, that the singing voice is merely the speaking voice sublimated; but I do believe the two are very closely related. And this seems to be borne out, on the whole, by the history of melodic speech. It is instructive in this connection to compare the nature of Byrd's vocal lines when he is setting English words to music (as in the Great Service) with the nature of them when he is setting Latin words (as in the five-part Mass). In both he manifests a superb command of vocal technique, but the lines in the Service are much bolder and more idiosyncratic, abounding in irregular rhythms and intervals. Although one mustn't put too much stress on particular examples, since the services of many English composers seem to have been set indiscriminately to Latin or English words, yet there can, as a general principle, be little doubt that the daringness and ruggedness—the rhythmic complexities, the leaps of seventh and ninth, the preference for accented passing-notes and false relation—which we recognize as typical of the polyphonic composers of 16th century England, relative to the suavity of the contemporary French and Italian schools, is largely due to the nature of the language spoken in 16th century England. (It is probable that English was then spoken with much more inflexion than it is to-day). I think there is a similar relation between the French language and the melodic lines of, say, Gabriel Fauré, and it is a relationship that seems to me fundamental to any great lyrical music. It is of course a text-book commonplace that the mellifluousness of the Italian language conditions the fact that the traditions of Italian music have always been pre-eminently vocal and lyrical.

II.

But in considering the origins of melodic speech we are concerned not with the local and topical differences which language entails, but with the fundamental basis of a few universal acoustical premisses over which these local differences manifest themselves; we are concerned, that is, with the elements which all melodic idioms have in common owing to the fact that the human vocal organs are constructed, the world over, according to the same principles. When we sing a given tone we call it, for convenience, a *single* tone: but in actual fact it is a component of the infinite number of tones embraced within the harmonic series, of which the prime few numbers are in suitable circumstances distinctly audible to the human ear. These prime partials are the intervals defined by vibration ratios of

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2 to 1, 3 to 2, and 4 to 3 in that order—the octave, the fifth, and the fourth (which is the fifth converted). This means, of course, that no one can sing or give utterance to tones without being subconsciously aware of these relationships, and the reason for their enormous importance in all primitive musics becomes clear.

A further characteristic of these intervals is that the difference between the fifth and the fourth defines the interval of the 'tone'—the norm of all conjunct motion in European music until the unequivocal acceptance of equal temperament and the Schönbergian semitone. The natural intervallic relations themselves define the natural norm of progression, and that these prime elements of song-speech link up with spoken speech was suggested by Vaughan Williams when he pointed out how a speaker, moved by passion, will tend to allow his voice to fluctuate between two adjacent tones incorporating at points of dramatic climax a sudden leap or fall of fourth or fifth. Such natural figures are among the fundamental formulae, the opening gambits, of folk-song as of plainsong (which began as intoned speech): they are the essentials of melodic idiom, from which song germinates.

Suppose we call our prime tones C, F, G, c, then if one takes the fourths and fifths from the two interior tones (F and G, the original fourth and fifth), one arrives at two new tones and at a more extended, five-note melody-figure (the pentatonic scale) which is the basis of the idioms of almost all primitive musics. The five-tone figure (represented by C, D, F, G, B flat, c) dominates musics as extreme and diverse as those of Africa, China and Japan, India, Egypt, the Australian Bush, the Provencal trouvères, Palestine, and English and American folk cultures; while the theory of Yasser that plainsong is fundamentally pentatonic (with two auxiliary tones, used mainly decoratively, to make up the seven-tone modal scale) is increasingly gaining ground. It is remarkable that even when the seven-tone mode was clearly established through the addition of fifths and fourths to the pentatonic additions to the original three-tone figure, and some troubadour songs, for instance, were betraying an unmistakable diatonic tendency with a somewhat surprising use of the not naturally vocal, sub-semitonal leading note, the vocal five-tone figure still maintained its deep anchorage on the evolution of melodic idiom, and pentatonic thought remained fundamental[2]. From the thirteenth to the sixteenth century the seven-tone melody figures owed their tonal and rhythmic fluidity to the fact that they obeyed the dictates of the voice; even the harmony was inseparable from a vocal way of thought. It wasn't till late after the triumph of equal temperament—the surrendering of modal and rhythmic variety for the ability to modulate that the natural vocal conception of melodic

[2] 'Many troubadour melodies have pentatonic character, apparent less in the use of a pure pentatonic scale than in the frequent employment of minor thirds, with the intervening tone, if present, of such a character that it may fairly be interpreted as a *pièn*-tone.' (Reese).

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evolution became victimized by the instrumental and harmonic one; (if we arrange the tones of the diatonic scale of C major in some such order as C, G, F, E, A, d, B, c, we can see that the melody shapes implicit in the diatonic idiom depend on each tone bearing harmonic relations to the others): and it wasn't until Schönberg's twelve-tone system (which literally leaves no tone—or technically speaking semitone—unstirred) that the implications of instrumental equal temperament were consummated, and here we can see that the theory of the tone-row—the *artificial* ordering of the *semitone*—bears a very curious and perverse analogy to those pentatonic and modal figures which constituted the *spontaneous* organization of the tone. A natural vocal idiom has its own melody-shapes implicit in its vocal organization ; only in an equal tempered chromaticism is the deliberate *manufacture* of melody-shapes necessary. A composer such as Weelkes or Bach or Mozart can magnificently exploit chromaticism as a momentary intensification of a stable, tonally founded idiom: but advanced chromaticism, in and for itself, always seems to coincide with a disintegration of human feeling. Thus, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, in the music of Gesualdo, we can observe a gain in the dramatic poignancy of the brief immediate fragment (accompanied by boldness of harmonic complexion) achieved at the expense of that grand organization of extended lyrical material in accordance with the discipline of the voice which we call the modal system—and which sprang from an order personal, social, and even religious. Similarly the diatonic system decayed into the deliquescence of feeling and tonal instability which marks the Tristanesque music of the late nineteenth century ; and the connection between chromaticism and ' romanticism '—the cult of the personal and subjective—is revealed.

It is misleading, then, to think of scales as sequences of ascending or descending tones: as such they are merely abstractions, something *made out of* the things the voice naturally does. Thus ' in the British Isles and America there exists a repertory of distinct melodies, limited in number and set for the most part to texts in English. These airs are perceptible in numerous versions of varying lengths . . and constitute the life-blood of the folk melodic organism in English-speaking tradition: and the airs included in it (about 40) are universally diffused, and in their various forms they account for by far the greater part of the musical settings to our traditional songs in English, as well as a number in Gaelic, Welsh and Manx'. (S. P. Bayard). Similarly 'I have found that the mode (*echos*) in Byzantine chant is not absolutely connected with a certain *finalis*, but with the occurrence of a group of *maqams* which form the melody of each mode. The scales were gradually evolved by a process of grouping certain formulæ on which all the melodies were built (*enechema*) . . . The composer did not have to compose an entirely new canon: his task was rather that of a modest artisan who wished to add to an admired model something which seemed permissable to him as an intensification, a beautifying, or a small variation' (Egon Wellesz). Similarly in Indian music there is no fixed scale but a fixed group of

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fundamental intervals, and the precise vibration value of a note depends on its position in a progression and not on its relation to a tonic. ' The quarter-tone or *scruti* is the microtonal interval between notes of the 'scale', but as the theme rarely employs two and never three scale notes in succession the microtonal inflexion is used only in ornament'. (Chromatic notes in the European modal system, though they came to have harmonic significance, were in the first place inflectional). Each Indian song is in a particular ***raga*** or selection of five, six or seven tones with certain characteristic vocal progressions and a chief note to which the singer constantly returns. 'None of the ragas contains more than seven substantive notes and there is no modulation. The raga is the melody mould and to sing is to improvise, with a wealth of microtonal inflexions or grace notes and in very elaborate rhythms made up of sums (not multiples) or two and three, on the theme thus defined' (after Coomaraswamy). Similarly in ancient Hebraic music 'a mode is composed of a number of motives within a certain scale. The motives have different functions. There are beginning and concluding motives and motives of conjunctive and disjunctive character. The composer operates with the material of these traditional folk-cultures within a certain mode for his creations. His composition is nothing but his arrangement and combination of this limited number of combinations;[3] his 'freedom' of creation consists further of embellishments and in modulations from one mode to another' (Idelsohn). Similarly in plainsong 'it is not so much initial tones as initial *figures* that are accredited with modal significance'.

In all these cases, and in many others, the theory of scale is clearly merely a generalization from the facts of song. Reese's account of the five-stage development of plainsong gives a good idea of the process of melodic evolution: first the motive as symbol, then the motive as an independent musical entity, then the analysis of the intervals and progressions involved in the motive, then the development of the theory of scale from this analysis and finally the merging of the theory once more in creation. In the tropes of plainsong we can watch the formulæ of intoned speech flowering into self-subsistent lyricism and song. And I think that the first great lesson which the Middle Ages have to teach us is that of the expressive advantages as well as (or rather than) the limitations of monody or music conceived in terms of a single line: purity of intonation, subtlety and fluidity of movement, modal variety, and fluency based on the natural capabilities of the human voice. Now is a time when it is particularly urgent to remember these things for contemporary music has suffered much from theories maintaining that, after Wagner and the dissolution of tonality, it is necessary to base one's theory on an instrumental conception of the equal tempered semitone, whether neo-diatonic, as in the case of Hindemith, or twelve-tonal as in the case of Schönberg. These theories,

[3]To this method the technique of Schönberg's tone-row provides a direct (if synthetic) analogy.

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although formulated by men whose greatness and integrity it is impossible not to respect, are, as Hans Gal pointed out in a recent article in *Music and Letters*, fundamentally fallacious because the human ear knows no way of 'understanding' a musical composition other than by memorizing its phrases subconsciously, and the only way to do this is by mental *vocalization*. The great instrumental period in European music arose out of the vocal and never lost contact with it (*e.g.* most of the greater Bach fugue subjects, the Mozart adagio, the Beethoven 'Italian opera' aria, the slow movement in the Lydian mode quartet, the opening fugue of opus 131, and even the Chopin Nocturne). If some twelve-tone music seems to be incomprehensible to all except its creator it is because it has relinquished the natural basis of musical speech which is common to all men, and by obliterating the 'comma' (the acoustic distinction between C sharp and D flat) has betrayed the roots of melodic thought in the human ear. Nothing has done more than the equal-tempered piano and the later work of Wagner (or anyway of his imitators) to foster general musical illiteracy and a dishonest use of the materials of the composer's craft.

To work within the limits of a vocally conceived idiom implies no irksome restriction; on the contrary, it is only within its natural limitations that music attains true freedom. We have only to consider the tropes of the Gregorian chant, or the finest melodies of the troubadours (which derived both from plainchant and folk-song), to appreciate the extraordinary emotional intensity which a vocally conceived monody may attain to: and plainchant and troubadour songs are by no means the isolated phenomena, the divine accidents in musical history, that they are popularly supposed to be. The immense length of line, soaring proudly out of the simplest vocal premisses, and the subtlety of the modal and rhythmic inflexions not only of plainchant and troubadours but also of the Spanish *Cantigas*, the monophonic work of Léonin and Perotin[4] and the great Notre Dame school, and to a lesser degree of the folk-song-like Italian *Laudi*, certainly place this music among the supreme melodic achievements of history; and the apparently pernickety structural 'rules' (conditioned by the poetry) of (for instance) troubadour music allow for so rich a variety of detail that, as Reese puts it, 'far from being primitive, the troubadour melodies anticipate practically all later song forms'. Music may have gained much in a variety of ways since the great monodic ages, but one can hardly claim that, purely from the melodic point of view, music has 'progressed' far even if, indeed, except in the few outstanding instances, it may

[4]The lines of Léonin (whose most important work was done between 1160 and 1180) are the broader and (naturally) the closer to plainsong, moving mainly by conjunct motion and the pentatonic minor third, with occasional ecstatic glissandi that may owe something to Arab influence: Perotin's relatively agile line (his school flourished from about 1180 to 1236) owes more to troubadour technique and becomes more susceptible of polyphonic treatment.

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properly be said to have come within measurable distance of catching up.

III.

The centrality of vocal monody is the first great lesson that mediæval music has to teach us: the other is implicit in one of the most fascinating phenomena in the whole history of art—the birth of polyphony. The desire to create music in more than one voice would seem to have first manifested itself in two closely connected ways which may have been, to begin with, accidental. When a group of untrained people imagines itself to be singing in unison (or at the octave) it will sometimes be found that several members of the party adapt the music conveniently to the pitch of their voices by singing a fifth or fourth apart from the main body of singers without realizing (so deep is the hold of the perfect consonances) that they are not singing in unison. When this happens we have an unconscious example of organum—the first type of art-music to employ simultaneously voices at different pitches. Of course strict organum was not polyphony, for polyphony implies some degree of contrary motion; but we may call it 'symphonious' music according to the definition of Hucbald: 'Consonance is the judicious and harmonious mixture of two tones which exists if only two tones, produced from different sources, meet in one joint sound, as happens when a boy's voice and a man's sing the same thing, or in that which they commonly call Organum'.

Another accident that may happen in choral singing among primitive cultures is that two singers may unintentionally give different versions of the same line. At first the intervals which result will be fortuitous and their intonation vague: but in more sophisticated cultures it will not be long before the intervals become clearly defined, with one line taking the theme while the others play round it and vary it without departing so far from it that one may say they have melodic independence. This type of music is known as heterophony, and the nature of the intervals involved in it will depend, of course, on the structure of the melodies peculiar to the culture, though in most cases they will be those implicit in the pentatonic scale.

Polyphony in Europe seems to have begun as the interaction of these two prime principles of organum and heterophony:[5] parallel and free organum (diaphony) are seen as two aspects of the same thing, and we find John Cotton not only admitting all the recognized consonances into organum but explicitly encouraging contrary motion and the crossing of parts. At first the two notes of the organum, which were two slightly different ways of saying the same thing, moved (naturally enough) note for note; but soon composers became attracted by the possibility of creating counter-melodies

[5]The existence of instruments, particularly the organ with key-board, must have aided the process of the birth of polyphony; but was not, I think, the fundamental motive. (See section V).

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more complex and elaborately rhythmic than the original liturgical melodies and, as Reese puts it, 'a very important result of this was that the borrowed melodies became more and more long drawn out as the counter-melodies became increasingly elaborate until every note of the *tenor* [the name significantly derives from the Latin meaning] would, like a sort of pedal-point, support above it a complex group of notes in the duplum or triplum . . . We may perhaps see here the transference of the drone of folk music'. The model for the 'free' part of diaphony was of course the melismatic tropes of plainchant, and like the trope, polyphony was regarded in its early days merely as an embellishment of the Gregorian repertoire. But the fact that there was now more than one part implied, as Franco of Cologne early perceived, a revolution: for if the singers were to keep together, mensuration now became inevitable. The change from monody to polyphony was thus fundamentally a rhythmic one; during the great period, at least, of the Middle Ages polyphony does not entail any harmonic concept that is not implicit in vocal monody, that is to say in our sense it does not entail harmony at all. But the problem of mensural accent in part-writing was the real revolution, and it was one with the most far-reaching consequences.

Naturally, monophonically trained composers did not take kindly to mensuration and in their organa over a tenor cantus firmus for a long time allowed one part to remain more or less free and unmeasured. Conductus style (the origin of the name is dubious, unless it had something to do with liturgical processions) was their closest approach to a step-by-step organization, but even this, though it took over the ternary rhythmic 'modes' of the troubadours as the measure-basis for the discant of its duplum, triplum and even quadruplum, employed incidental melismata, overlapping, ellipsis and crossing of parts so elaborately that any effect of rigidity was dissipated: by the time of Pierre de la Croix (c. 1250) the ternary measure had been, even theoretically, superseded. In the motetus style which increasingly dominated the 13th century an ever completer differentiation between the parts was aimed at. The conception was never really harmonic: the absolute and perfect consonances, the harmonies implicit in a pentatonic way of melodic thought, remained the props of the tonal structure; but the continual revolutions around a single consonance bore more relation to folk heterophony than to specifically harmonic thought, and the effect of the added seconds and sixths of the intertwining upper parts was usually more pentatonic than triadic. Furthermore, what happened *in between* the points of concord was dictated entirely by melodic, not harmonic, considerations, and parallel seconds and dissonant clashes in the melismatic parts were no more taboo than parallel fifths. The art of thinking simultaneously on several melodic planes has never reached a more logical consummation than in the thirteenth century motet in which each part was not only in a different rhythm, but set to a different text, indiscriminately bawdy or secular, very often in different languages. The sixteenth century, while preserving fluidity and self-subsistence of line, aimed at the richest and most

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sonorous homogeneity of material, the reconciliation of the horizontal with the vertical: such a notion is completely remote from the thirteenth century when composers, according to Franco of Cologne, would first compose their *tenor* line complete (the plainsong basis being now dispensed with) and would then add the *motetus* and the *triplum* each as elaborate, independent linear compositions; each of them perfectly satisfying if sung solo while at the same time attaining, in conjunction with the other melodies, to an altogether subtler and more complex experience.

Round about 1330 Philip de Vitri coined the term Ars Nova for the school of polyphonic writing that was beginning to supplant the (by now designated) Ars Antiqua of Léonin and Perotin; and throughout the fourteenth century we can observe a gradual, if slight, tendency towards the sixteenth century homogeneity—the synchronization of part-writing accompanied tentatively by the domination of the triad—the harmonic norm implicit in seven-tone melody shapes rather than in pentatonic ones. The most mediæval means of achieving homogeneity was the device, explored in Machaut's remarkable *Hoquetus David*[6] and in the motets of Philip de Vitri, of isocronous rhythm—variations upon a rhythmic framework (completely emancipated from the restrictions of the old rhythmic 'modes') that remained constant throughout. The form would appear to be one of the most rigid in musical history: yet so subtle were the variations of tone value and texture, so elaborate the shifts of (what we would call) harmonic context, that the music attained, in the relentless logic of its development, to an extraordinary steely power and monumental grandeur.

More important from the point of view of historical evolution, is the much greater use, during the fourteenth century, of canon; for the tendency to make the parts homogeneous rather than heterogeneous can hardly be carried further than by giving all the parts the same melodic material to play with. The use of a single generating cell in the 'gigantic motet' which is Machaut's *Mass* is also significant, while this composer's elaborate *cancrizans* begin a tradition that survived until the end of the fifteenth century. (Canonic device had been little more than latent in the 13th century rondeau style). The trend towards homogeneity manifested in Machaut's work, his relative fondness (in his secular compositions) for thirds and the major scale, his subtle use of chromaticism starting from the inflectional anti-tritonal B flat and F sharp, were further explored by the brilliant Italian trecento school (of which the chief composers were Jacopo da Bologna, Giovanni da Cascia, Vicenzo da Rimini, Francesco Landini, Nicolo da Perugio, Andrea da Firenze and Matteo da Perugia), since these musicians renounced polytextuality,

[6]Walter Odington defined the hoquet (hiccup) as 'a truncation made over the tenor in such a way that one voice is always silent while another sings'. There were various degrees of complexity in the style which is not of much evolutionary significance. Hoqueting is found in some primitive musical cultures also.

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which had been the essence of the 13th century motet, and reconciled a complex and rhythmically rich, often syncopated melisma, having contact both with troubadours and plainsong, increasingly with canonic devices, with a prevalence of leading-notes and perfect cadences (even though the music usually preserves the old harmonic base), and, in the ballata, even with a hint of 'harmonic' tonality, particularly in supertonic and mediant relations between the contrasting sections. Very long, florid lyrical passages, elaborate changes of metre and cross-rhythms of two against three, give to this music a fiery vitality and glowing clarity that make it a worthy product of one of the greatest, if not the greatest, period of Italian literature and civilization.

But it was in England that the Middle Ages first became, musically speaking, superseded by the Renaissance world; and it is no doubt significant that the English seem to have possessed very early a curiously advanced harmonic sense. Some very ancient Welsh harp music would seem to be definitely homophonic in conception, with a clear tonic-dominant basis; and although the celebrated account of Welsh choral singing given by Giraldus Cambrensis means in itself little more than that the Welsh were early accustomed to singing in parts, it is certainly true that Gymel or *cantus gemellus* —organum in parallel *thirds*, a more sophisticated and less vocal interval than the customary fourth or fifth—was of English origin, and Mr. Reese reinstates the case (contested by Professor Woolridge before the discovery of the Worcester manuscripts) for the English derivation of faux bourbon (processions of 6 : 3 chords—that is, incipient triads). The predilection of the English for richness of sonority is further attested by the famous six-part Reading Rota[7], even though it is not all true part-writing : and the motets of the school of Damett and Leonel Power are much closer to the note-for-note conductus style than to the 13th century motet, while possessing, of course, a much more triadic basis. 'The English contribution', says Mr. Reese, 'consists largely in the invention of melodies more pleasing than the French to ears trained on 18th and 19th century music and in the working out of smoother voice leading achieved by the characteristic progression of the parts in thirds and sixths . . . The enormous influence exerted by English methods on the Continental voice-leading is evident in the widespread adoption of the faux bourbon style . . . and in an apparently unconscious desire to bring some order into the progressions of chords, to relate them together, as chords . . . If we regard simultaneously sounding tones of different pitch in this music as vertical phenomena (an attitude perhaps justified by the very nature of faux bourbon) rather than as more or less accidental results of the combination of melodies, we notice here and there a succession of chords that seems to be governed by, or grouped

[7]Almost certainly the Reading Rota is not the isolated miracle that the history books used to claim it as, but merely one recorded example of a style which in popular secular music was widespread and common.

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about, some nodal harmony, generally that of the tonic or dominant . . . Yet in no case is there any question of a systematic approach towards harmony in the modern sense, or even of the awareness of the possibility of such a system. Such relationships as are found are of the simplest sort and seem to be entirely instinctive'. In particular the position of Dunstable in musical history would seem to be similar to that of Spenser in literary history: not perhaps himself a supremely imaginative artist, he was a link between the techniques of the old world and the new. After him and his French reputation, the way was clear for another supremely great creative artist Josquin des Pres; and for the triumph of sixteenth century polyphony.

It is perhaps significant that the greatest figure in fourteenth century music, Guillaume de Machaut, looks back nostalgically to the great age of the thirteenth century, and it is well that we should understand how in 'progressing' music lost much, polyphonically as well as monophonically. The lesson of sixteenth century polyphony as the truest (because melodic) instigator of harmonic vitality has by now been absorbed by a considerable number of creative musicians; but the lesson of thirteenth century polyphony is perhaps equally important, and is almost completely ignored. The school of polyphonic composers who grouped themselves around Perotin at Notre Dame created achievements worthy of comparison with the greatest achievements of Gothic architecture and literature. The soaring decorative detail of a Gothic cathedral, flowering out of the solid lines of the main structure rooted to the earth, may be paralleled by the involutions of melisma in a Perotin motet, flowering over the clear luminosity of the structure of the absolute and perfect consonances and over the tenor enunciating the essentials of melody in the nature of the human voice and ear. (That the tenor, which was vocal in conception and origin, came to be habitually performed on an instrument merely reinforced, by the contrast of tone-colour, its significance as the structural ground-plan of the composition). The music of the 13th century did not attain to the 15th century's notion of counterpoint as the means of giving order to polyphonic experience: but, though much of the music was no doubt experimental as is much of that in all ages artistically vital, we cannot deny, if we listen to the music, that the thirteenth century had its own criterion of order, and one which has much to teach us if we are willing to learn. Thirteenth century technique perhaps hasn't much bearing on our harmonic problems, though it might be salutary if it had some: but it has a great deal to tell us, in its linear independence and heterogeneity, about problems of musical texture, and there is no field in which the contemporary composer may more legitimately explore. The thirteenth century composer may teach the composer of the twentieth century how polytonalities and polyrhythms of a subtlety unsurpassed may be reconciled with, may indeed grow spontaneously out of, the natural resources of the art of sound. The influence is already being felt and Mr. Reese's monumental work of scholarship should do much, I hope, to encourage it.

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IV.

The importance of this matter of texture is worth dwelling on for a moment because it illuminates many of the most far-reaching problems of contemporary music. It was Tovey's custom to divide musical composition into two main classes, the first musical textures (of which the prime example is the fugue), the second musical shapes (of which the prime example is the sonata or symphony). Recent research, particularly into the early Welsh harp music, would seem to indicate that the conventional notion of homophony as a chronological consequence of polyphony has little basis in fact: but however this may be it is in general fairly clear that up to the beginning of the seventeenth century all art music save for some relatively unimportant dance pieces was texture-music in the sense that it was melodic in derivation; and that in a music conceived melodically and fugally (in the widest sense of the term) there could be no 'problem of form' because form was texture and the process of melodic evolution was composition.

It is with the establishment of equal tempered diatonicism and the possibility of modulation (key contrast and tension) that one gets the enunciation of the great musical shapes—the homophonic designs and architectures, the forms which, beginning with the simplest of externally imposed structures (the symmetrical measures of march and dance) merges into the most moving drama of themes, harmonies and tonal centres[8]. The wonderful achievements in the great musical 'shapes' of European music are not of course in question; but their preponderance did lead to some unfortunate consequences in that, in thinking of music from the point of view of tonal shapes, it became possible to conceive of a divorce between form and texture. (Byrd or Bach or Mozart could never have thought of a composition as 'well orchestrated'—to them it was simply well (or ill) composed). The very rules of 'harmony', with their insistence on contrary motion, indicate how a vital homophony to some extent derives from and implies polyphonic or textural procedure (we remember Chopin's account of the diatonic homophony of Mozart): and the preoccupation of Mozart, Haydn, Beethoven, Schubert, Verdi and Mahler (among others) with fugue and polyphonic texture during their later days seems to indicate that the more significant composers were aware of latent dangers which became patent when (as I have previously indicated) the diatonic shapes decayed, towards the end of the century, into the rhetorical use of the higher chromatic dis-

[8]The following particular instance of Tovey's illuminates his texture-shape distinction: 'You cannot conceive that any movement of the B minor Mass should need some merely architectural chords to complete it; but when musicians regard the last forty-odd bars of Beethoven's C minor symphony as a meaningless noise they are as far from truth as the most naïve listener to whom a fugue is a tuneless chaos. These forty bars are meaningless without the rest of the symphony, but the symphony ends as truly within its own length as the Et in terra pax of the B minor Mass'.

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cords. The weakness of much of Liszt's music, for all his remarkable originality, seems to me to consist in the monotony and turgidity of texture which his rhetorical conception of harmony entails; while the fugal writing of men like Reger and Franck is sometimes so harmonically dictated as to have no real linear contour, no musical definition, at all. If your harmony is of an extremely chromatic order the component lines of it are obliged to move with a certain contorted agility that might look like true polyphony—until you try to sing the parts as independent melodies when they are too often revealed as fragmentary strands of an harmonic woof, strands that peter out without establishing melodic significance. In a sense it is a kind of dishonesty—or anyway a lack of cleanliness and clarity—in musical thinking; the value of the study of thirteenth century polyphony, for contemporary composers engrossed with the relation between texture and melodic independence, is surely obvious.

After Mahler, one of the first and most important of contemporary composers to become absorbed in problems of texture was Schönberg. He had started as a chromatic-harmonic, Brahmsian-Wagnerian *fin-de-siècle* composer, and the twelve-tone system, at once a logical growth and a reaction, was among other things an attempt to achieve a new polyphony based on the complete linear independence between parts which could be attained by abolishing all 'vertical' harmonic relations. Theoretically the method of the tone-row is very close to thirteenth century polyphony: but as we have seen, Schönberg paradoxically founded what was in essence a melodic (and therefore vocal) idiom on premisses deriving from the instrumental and harmonic conception of the equal-tempered semitone from which he had started, and this is why, in my opinion, his idiom cannot be an adequate musical language for the future, notwithstanding the integrity of its theory if once you grant its premisses, and notwithstanding the very beautiful effects of texture which Schönberg is able incidentally to achieve. The fact that Berg, generally admitted to be the most significant of twelve-tone composers, sometimes compromises to the extent of introducing into his tone-rows sequences of notes which have tonal implications (for instance those of the diatonic triad) doesn't effect the issue since the more the composer compromises with Nature's ways of ordering tones the less necessity, obviously, is there for any artificial method of ordering them; and you are back (along with the thirteenth century composer) at the point from which you started.

Hindemith, despite his (I think mistaken) attempts to include instrumental theory in the basic principles of his art, has never belittled the voice's share in the moulding of melodic speech, and in his profound acquaintance with musical tradition and his concern for texture, has composed some of his finest work directly under the influence of mediæval models; even Stravinsky, a not naturally vocal composer, has manifested his later interest in texture with greater subtlety and depth when he has responded (which does not of course imply conscious imitation) to a mediæval way of thought. (The disturbingly beautiful slow sections of the wind *Octet* are a case in

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point). Among composers who habitually thought lyrically and vocally, Roussel owed much of his richness to the recognition that he belonged to the tradition that had produced Perotin and Machaut; while the music of Charles Koechlin, perhaps the most remarkable of all contemporary composers from the point of view of texture, is also the closest to mediæval technique, owing its extreme clarity and luminosity to a melodic conception based on rhythmic plasticity within conjunct motion and the intervals of fourth and fifth, and to a tonal structure based, however polyharmonic, polytonal and polyrhythmic the music may grow, on the absolute and perfect consonances rather than on the diatonic triad. Points of contact with mediæval procedure are also noticeable in some of Bartók's work, and among the younger composers devoted to texture Michael Tippett and Boshulav Martinu have explored lucidly enunciated polyrhythms and pentatonic line. (In Tippett's work however the mediæval interest cannot be separated from the influence of negro music, and his polyrhythmic experiments usually preserve a metrical basis—for instance that of 3 plus 3 plus 2 against 4 plus 4). With the more significant American and Latin-American composers, such as Aaron Copland and Roy Harris, Carlos Chavez and Silvestre Revueltas, compositional problems and problems of texture seem to be inseparable.

The study of mediæval (or any other) music cannot serve as a panacea for the contemporary composer's difficulties which can be solved of course only by his own initiative. But mediæval procedure, perhaps because of the very remoteness of the mediæval spiritual climate from the perplexities of the twentieth century, can at least tell him much that is of the utmost importance in the maintenance of a stable tradition. The fundamental centrality of vocal monody and the cleanliness of texture arising from melodic organization are lessons of a value that is timeless and placeless, and if they are not in themselves sufficient impetus for the production of great music they would at least discourage the production of much music that is perverse because without natural foundation, shoddy because without logic in the manipulation of the materials of the art of sound.

V.

I have tried in these pages to give some general account of the possible significance of the study of mediæval music for the contemporary composer, since anything like an adequate review of Mr. Reese's formidable work of scholarship would hardly be apposite in a periodical not exclusively devoted to music, even if I were competent to write such a review. But I should state clearly that as a compilation of facts, evidence and statistics *Music in the Middle Ages* is one of the most important musicological productions of the twentieth century; and that it should be in the library of every serious student who would then, I hope, proceed to use its information creatively by getting to know as much of the music as possible at first hand. If Mr. Reese's book led to the publication of more of the music in accessible editions it would have done work of inestimable importance.

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The point is often made that it is impossible to make judgments about mediæval music because we can have only the vaguest notions as to how it was performed. Those who have assimilated Mr. Reese's very considerable body of contemporary evidence about notation and methods of performance might retort that such pessimism is mainly an excuse for laziness: even if we knew much less about mediæval performance than we actually do (assuming we're willing to learn) that still wouldn't excuse us from the attempt at re-creation —an effort which, after all, is involved to some degree in the performance of any music not contemporary or belonging to the immediate past. Scholastic disagreements (they are aggressive) as to how Bach should be performed do not lead to his complete neglect: the only way to achieve understanding of any music is to sing it, play it, listen to it. If the extraordinarily beautiful and moving records of twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth century monody and polyphony, both French and Italian trecento, made by L'Oiseau Lyre in particular (and also those included in L'Anthologie Sonore) do not convince us that the labour involved is worth while there is nothing for it but that our musical education shall remain lopsided. (Mr. Reese's volume includes a lengthy, comprehensive and tempting list of records, most of which are since the war unfortunately unobtainable).

I do not want to suggest that there are not many mysteries about mediæval music which all Mr. Reese's scholarship fails to clear up. Chief among these is the question of instrumentation. There is no doubt whatever that both hydraulic and pneumatic organs (even if with exiguous keyboards) were common by the ninth century; and the ancient Welsh crwth was a three-stringed instrument which by resonance explicitly sounded the octave and fifth with a given tone. Written and pictorial contemporary evidence testifies to the existence of a large number of stringed and wind instruments throughout the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, and it seems almost incredible that these elaborate bands should have served no purpose other than to substitute on occasion for vocal lines[9]; incredible in particular that organs should have been used entirely for monodic or duophonic performance, that the organist's hands, improvising over the keyboard, should not have revealed to him the possibilities of vertical harmonic combinations. It is certainly true that serious composers from the early troubadours onwards regarded homophony as a rather 'low' and popular facet of musical activity: but it is difficult to believe that the troubadours made no, other than monodically preludial, use of their instruments, or that the very considerable instrumental resources of the Notre Dame school served no specifically instrumental purpose.

It is, however, easy to exaggerate the importance of the obscurities surrounding mediæval music. I have tried here to insist on

[9]Some of the polyphonic pieces, however, such as Machaut's *Hoquetus David*, seem to have been originally intended for wind instruments.

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its livingness, its creativeness, its 'message', if you will, both spiritual and technical, for us in the twentieth century. It is high time that musicians, not only for (as I have tried to show) their practical advantage but also in the maintenance of a decent humility, conquered that inertia which leads them to reject the music of what was probably the most civilized age in European history as mere 'clumsy stumblings' towards ideals which, whether they are those of a superlatively great man such as Bach or merely of one of our provincial organists and music teachers, certainly do not remotely resemble the ideals of the thirteenth century.

W. H. MELLERS.

NOTE:—The second article in this series will be on Vocal Polyphonic Technique in the Sixteenth Century.

FAREWELL AND WELCOME

I.

FULFILMENT IS NOT IN WAITING.

Seven long springs together we listened
Ears to earth for the growing of the daisy eyes
For the fructifying turnings of the worm,
And there was no sound:

Seven long summers we watched for the rains
Clouds coming over the horizon as big as a man's hand,
But there was a rustle of dry chaff
And the clanging of the cymbals of the prophets of Baal:

Seven long autumns we waited for the peach,
The nectarine, the bramble heavy with blackberries,
And our mouths were filled with the rotten seeds
Of sleepy pears:

Seven long winters we prayed for snow
To cover the hollows and ridges
Of the terrain with white equity,
And there were broken edges.

Drying and dying and trying to find speech,
How long have I sat waiting for the mountain stream
To cut the pebbles cleanly,
And it is the tepid, garrulous tide
Dispersing over the mudflats that has come.

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I am not asking for the incredible deftness of the spider
Or the adaptability of the chameleon
Or the ingenuity of the opossum
Or the fertility of the guinea-pig;
For me would suffice the surprise
Of the ordinary daily contact of lip with lip
And spirit with spirit.

II.

DISTANCE HAS MAGIC.

The layers that shale off experience
Like shavings from a sharpened pencil
Come floating some hard, some tenuous,
Not easily related and not to be grasped by sense
As being placed here at this time or even
As having happened at all.

Walking in a soft envelope of mist,
Beyond that gable where the light curves and is diffused
I see sometimes a hill, sometimes a cupola
Poised in mid-air, or, twisted by the wind
A melancholy and withering smile.
If in the maze one can say 'at this point
I smell the sea' or 'over there is the church tower',
Then there is an advance towards crystallization,
Towards the process of recognizing a thought
(Arriving seemingly from outside space or time)
As a bullet, a percentage, spent perhaps
Yesterday, as a rejected or refused caress.

In bed, pondering on the rattle of the barrage,
I draw comfort from the straddling stick;
From the ricochet, the shell-splinter
After the raider has passed, death may come
To the confident, or bombs burst harmlessly
At the feet of those muscle-bound by terror.
This not understood, fear spreads netwise,
Planes gather in the night humming
With a de-synchronized sound, and great
Parachutes smother the mind.

The distant foeman over the rooftops
Is a presence magically near against the ear-drums
And within the brain, nearer than in this bed
Are you, friend, who can be touched
With the hand but not with the mind,

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A blur of black hair flowing with tears.
Thus nearness is pitched beyond clouds,
Stretching the last strands of flesh
To wander whither in far air,
Fellow to the whistle of a solitary bird.

III.

NEARNESS HAS TERRORS.

For seven years a laborious proximation
To the beginnings of intimacy
Kept on a knife-edge this relation
Which was precise, limited and unfree.

When I shut my eyes to the onrush
Of new landscapes, I see nearing and receding
A face once visaged as flesh of my flesh,
Now late perceived to be a consequence of a wedding.

A not-too-distant kinship with royalty,
A sound grasp of Milton and Stilton,
An assured manner at tea;
These with a proper 'background' and 'tone'
Were the soil for emotional plants to grow on.

The analysis and censorship
Of every spontaneous surge of feeling
Led to badinage and the cutting short at the lip
Of the longed-for word and the spirit's stirring.

Fears of a rebuff or a maladroit reply
Nourished a tough membrane of sophistication
And threatened the gradual atrophy
Of the most delicate centres of integration.

Along with the collection of T'ang
Grave figures and Georgian salt-cellars
Were locked up convictions of right and wrong,
Never opened of course to casual callers

Or indeed to friends of the family:
With them it was felt better
To put on false noses and make Romilly
Play ping pong with Priscilla or piquet her.

But even when we've settled Harunobu's hash
And carefully distinguished Yeishi from Yeisen,
There's the relation of mind to brush,
The merging curve of technique and emotion.

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Occasionally a chord, a phrase or even a look
Brought the elaborate fabrication
To the edge of that abyss from which no hook
Can draw up leviathan,

To those roaring forties of the mind
Where shoal and quick-sand await
The swimmer whose bubbling breath brined
In his lungs pants for the dreamy gate.

More often there was intelligent discussion
Of the latest 'id' or 'ism'
In which the strivings for truer vision
Were dismissed with a neat sarcasm;

Or visits to the family seat provided
An opportunity for chatting with Dowager Lady Waffle
About Old Proddy as a child—undecided
Whether to give my wit the whip or snaffle.

Better were evenings with the locals at the Star
Looking for signs from trees or birds
To show that this village was immune from war,
Or deducing the date of victory from sherds.

Best perhaps, bicycling through the late summer fields
Heavy with meadowsweet and honeysuckle,
Long lances of light breaking across the shields
Of foliated clerestory and buttress pinnacle;
Precarious poise that a satisfied moment yields.

And always with my inward ear hearing the cry
Of unborn children and seeing within me
The expanse of spirit, waste and dry,
Shaded from sun and rain by the poison tree.

Friend, friendship can be too close
And too present if some power does not move
Friendship to enrich itself and compose
This contact in the deeper modulation of love.

IV.

DEFINITION OF LOVE.

When love comes there should be
Quick indrawn breath at the sight of a head-turn
Or the apprehension of a slight quiver
Of an eyelid. Then the apertures of sense
Stretch themselves to absorb

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Experiences hitherto unsought, tintinnabulations
Of heart distantly calling to heart, the shiver
And shock of unexpected absence,
The soothing profile of longed-for return.
Tension where there is feeling,
A taut rope over precipices
And the distant thunder of cataracts of tears,
Is preferable to the interminable spaces
Without landmarks, without trees, without rivers.
When a polite company is visiting the theatre
The extent of the lethargy and the horror
Stretched between man and woman
Is not to be gauged by the pity and terror
Expelled and compensated by the action on the stage,
But rather by the diminuendos
Of the conversation between the acts.
As I see love it is something winged
And on fire, bridging gulfs, squaring
Circles, transmuting commonplaces,
Challenging impossibilities.
This may be the wild talk of a lover
But this is what we are discussing now, love.
It may come when least asked-for,
Be withheld to the most piteous prayers,
Come stealing in the night
Or rushing as an express train
Assaults the eye in the cinema.
But when it comes it cannot be mistaken.
About its endurance no-one can boast
Without foolhardiness, but of its possession
One can speak with confidence and pride.
It is not something to be mewed in corners
But to be bruited to the world in market places;
It does not need the artificiality
Of loudspeakers or the bravado of advertisement,
But it penetrates to the inmost recesses
Nor does it fear the light of day.
Love can be measured only with divine scales
Not by the pennyweight standard of the provincial grocer
Or the proprieties of a Kensington drawing-room.
Love is not round the corner or left in the nursery,
Or seen on Broadway or pictured in Bali,
It is here and now, or never.
It is pervasive in the sick-bed, the tenement,
The lathe, the scalpel, the microscope,
It permeates the ganglia and the chromosomes;
It is proud in the border of high sunflowers
And meek with the crouching violet.
Praise.

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V.

FREEDOM LIES IN ACCEPTANCE.

Heart, look at those ripples of violet light
Greening the ice-filmed lake
And diligent tracery of birch.
This is winter now, the soul's frozen night,
But the stored element of fire
Insidiously undermining will delightedly break
The hemming surface. See, the blocks urge
Their melting way to the long strait,
Clashing and crushing fear
And the hesitation that trembled on this verge.

On my own granite cliffs
When the slow stroke of morning
Topped the breakers, blanching the lichen-grey coast,
How often have I seen gulls drift,
Teeter, spin and in great circles breast
The eddying air, feathers ruffling
In the joy of, the mastery of the blast.
These airy lovers, billowing by whatever time
Or seascape, coupled in storm and stress,
No jealous worm tries or destroys, and centuries
Will witness their freedom and expressive prime.

Man and woman moving through their passion
Refine and glorify those outer bodies
That suffice for chance and daily contact;
Climbing from low to high, from clay to bone,
They weld a juncture that disdains decay.
Like these birds, not reckoning hour or minute,
Rebounding from earth with an Antæan strength
They are gathered in great cycles of air and fire,
Finding themselves rapt in acceptance
Of love's brimming and renewed encounter.

RONALD BOTTRALL.

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A CASE FOR KIPLING?[1]

> ' . . . talked pure Brasenose to him for three minutes. Otherwise he spoke and wrote trade-English—a toothsome amalgam of Americanisms and epigrams'. *The Village That Voted The Earth Was Flat.*

MR. ELIOT'S criticism, at the period when it was evidently a product of the same mind and interests as also created the poetry, was not only bodied in some of the most aristocratic prose of the century, but displayed an intelligence that gave his judgments a rare authority and confidence. Not, one must admit, that Mr. Eliot was ever a wholly reliable critic, and often one was compelled to modify or even disagree with particular valuations. But throughout the early work the direction of argument was evident, tending to the refashioning of obliterated standards, and above all to a conception of art and literature as the product of a lively interplay of individual integrity and social vigour.

In the course of the introductory essay to his choice of poems by Kipling, Mr. Eliot writes: 'Having previously exhibited an imaginative grasp of space, and England in it, he now proceeds to a similar achievement in time'; and he quotes in support of this shift of activity the following tales: *An Habitation Enforced, My Son's Wife,* and *The Wish House.* Now what is striking about this particular judgment is not that it is so indefinite as to be hardly worth making, for it shares this blemish with the rest of the essay, but that Mr. Eliot should now practise a critical discipline that permits him to reproduce verbatim and without acknowledgment (that is, unconsciously) the indefinite judgments of others. For in his book on Kipling, Mr. Shanks writes: 'England now gave him not merely consolation but a new extension of life. Whereas on his departure from India he had sought this extension in space, he now found it in time'; and he in turn quotes the following stories: *An Habitation Enforced, Friendly Brook, The Wish House,* and *My Son's Wife.* But one should not deduce from this that Mr. Eliot's essay is nothing but plagiarism of lesser critics, for much of it is a stylistic plagiarism of Mr. Eliot himself. There is the familiar air of subtle differentiation, coupled with the pervasive refusal to observe any precise demarcations. The tone has about it that judicious detachment that was once so suggestive of meaning, but is now employed simply to disarm criticism and to enforce a personal view. Indeed Mr. Eliot seems to feel himself in a new role, that of legal pajandrum, when he admits that readers unacquainted with Kipling 'might perhaps imagine that

[1] *A Choice of Kipling's Verse,* made by T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 8/6).

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I had been briefed in the cause of some hopelessly second-rate writer, and that I was trying, as an exhibition of my ingenuity as an advocate, to secure some small remission of the penalty of oblivion'. And though Kipling, anxious to stand well with posterity, expressed some anxiety as to who, 'when our story comes to be told, will have the telling of it', one feels that he would have hesitated before inviting the author of *Triumphal March* to undertake the task. In fact Mr. Eliot has all too evidently briefed himself. And at least one of the clues to the enigma has already been suggested; whereas Mr. Eliot's best criticism related to his poetic interests, his critical concern for Kipling is accompanied by the admission that 'part of the fascination of this subject is the exploration of a mind so different from my own'. In fact, if the two minds are still (or so one hopes) poetically exclusive, as individuals one can detect a certain affiliation, or in the case of Mr. Eliot a would-be affiliation, between the men; unfortunately it is the human rather than the artistic factor that seems to have predominated.

The main case against the claim that Kipling revealed an imaginative grasp on space and then on time, is that the imagination he revealed in the process has far more in common with that of the industrial pioneer, the man who exploits the backward area, than with that of the artist who by contrast opens up inner regions of individual feeling. By this I do not mean here to imply the usual criticism of Kipling, that he was the voice of British Imperialism, but rather and more relevantly that his mind was a very crude instrument, seldom if ever in touch with finer spiritual issues, and that in consequence his grasp on anything at all delicate has about it the virtuosity of the Chinese juggler. He found, very early on in his career, that he possessed a facility for conveying the atmosphere of a people and the type-emotions of an individual, and he spent a life-time exploiting and developing this talent. But essentially the process is that of the news-camera, of the highly efficient journalist eye, and the journalist ear and nose and palate as well. It is on this level, and not, for instance, as implying a concern analogous to Hopkin's struggle with language, that one has to understand Kipling's remark that 'it is necessary that every word should tell, carry, weigh, taste and, if need be, smell'. And exactly what this means in practice can be seen in *Kim*, which Mr. Eliot in fact quotes in this context and which he feels to be Kipling's 'greatest book'. This novel is so disarmingly superficial that even its less pleasant elements, those relating to the colour conflict, fail to give any sharp offence. And if indeed it seems to be one of his most satisfactory works, that is because the author's main interest is still (the book appeared in 1901) that of the boggle-eyed and fascinated initiate, and not yet that of the legislator. As he himself wrote: '*Kim*, of course, was nakedly picaresque and plotless—a thing imposed from without'. However, most often his flights of imagination, whether in space or time, seem to me merely ineffectual. Mr. Eliot quotes at length, and with admiration, from *The Finest Story In The World*; and certainly it is a test-case, since here Kipling faces himself not

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only with the ordinary job of writing an efficient tale, but with the added task of hinting at the 'finest story in the world', and of convincing his reader that it is as fine as the tale demands. Actually this 'finest story' seems to consist of nothing but a set of historical-cameos of a fairly vivid and entirely trivial nature, and these distinct episodes are related to each other not with a view to illustrating historical continuity, but simply as a means of dramatising a crude belief in metempsychosis. The quality of imagination displayed is that of the scenario-writer, and the tale as a whole is on the level of *The Strand Magazine*. For all Mr. Eliot's remark that Kipling 'is almost "possessed" of a kind of second-sight', his vision, whether of the normal or the psychic variety, remains consistently that of the journalist, and his reconstructions of the past have as little *artistic* interest as his descriptions of the present. Except for children, there seems little to be said on behalf of this imagination; but of course, though children probably do enjoy *Puck Of Pook's Hill* and the *Jungle Books*, Kipling rather hoped that adults would like them too, and hence the claims, often made on their behalf by his admirers, that they reveal a mature and subtle sense of historical tradition. Mr. Eliot, before supporting such an idea, might profitably read through some of his own essays dealing with tradition and continuity.

That Kipling is essentially a journalist, almost the founder of modern journalism, seems generally admitted; and for most people his name is also associated with a reverence for the machine of British Imperialism. In any ordinary sense of the terms, these charges cannot profitably be denied; though Mr. Eliot devotes a full page of equivocations to the matter, even to answering the accusation that Kipling was a fascist (which surely no-one with a sense for chronological exactitude can have made) with the retort that fascism 'from the truly Tory point of view is merely the extreme degradation of democracy'; and concluding, in reply to the suggestion that Kipling believed in racial superiority, by quoting his genuine sympathy for the Indians in *Kim*, despite the fact that the whole point of that book, or at least its climax, is Kim's assertion of superiority, at the moment of crisis, simply by virtue of his white parentage, and his subsequent willingness to use his Hindu affiliations in the service of the white foreigners. After one has said all that can be said for Kipling, as Mr. George Orwell has said it excellently in *Horizon* (February, 1942), after one has admitted his historical value, or his verbal dexterity, or has commended him as a 'great verse-writer' or as a 'good bad poet', or has stressed his undoubted sense of national responsibility—after saying all this and a great deal else, one inevitably returns to what seem to me the two fundamental issues: that Kipling developed in the Eighteen Nineties; and that he suffered the common disability of an artistic decadence, which is an atrophy of finer feeling. Ultimately all one's criticisms resolve themselves to this historical consideration on the one hand, and to the moral issue on the other. And because the case has been made repeatedly on the level of the particular, I wish here simply to consider the implications of these more general issues.

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Perhaps the main feature of the last decade of the nineteenth century in this country was its internal irruption. One thinks too exclusively of the Eighteen Nineties as the era of Dandyism and the Decadence, of Wilde and Beardsley, forgetting that it was also a period both of imperial expansion and of the new socialism, of Rhodes and of the Webbs. It was, in fact, a period of social disintegration. The gaudy triumphs of imperialism, culminating in Mafeking Night, fostered, in the energy released, a spirit of irresponsibility in the realm of ideas. The keyword of the decade was *new*, and this concern expressed itself in two main ways: in literature, and in art generally, the new was expressed in a cult of virtuosity, a search for the exotic and the rare, and in a taste for antithesis and epigram; while in the social and political sphere, it showed itself in a flowering of socialist and Fabian ideas on the one hand, and on the other in a realization by imperialism of its unsuspected power and dominion. At a somewhat analogous period, Marlowe gives expression to a similar combination of circumstances, and if his liking for sonorous and exotic language and his idealization of the merchant-adventurer were not inimical to the production of fine art, that was due to a set of cultural circumstances, above all perhaps to a social homogeneity, that was no longer operative when Kipling came to the fore. The impoverishment of life left his work as shallow as Marlowe's had been vigorous, and the atomisation of the social scene found him hovering between the superficially divergent worlds of art and politics, much as Wilde also toyed with socialism, and Wells with literature. Kipling's early life in India gave him, almost inevitably, the imperial outlook and the colour prejudice. But he was also born of artistic parents, and became a close friend of Burne-Jones. And thus he came to satisfy his longings for a life of active service to the Empire, a life he was never able to experience except by proxy, through the medium of his writing. And to us the consequences of such a combination are not sympathetic. The Empire that Kipling glorified, with the devotion that he sought to evoke on its behalf, has since then split up and it is now in a state of flux. Mandalay has become the centre of an allied reverse of the most critical importance, and a whole civilization has been endangered by a short battle fought out on the very road that symbolized so much romance for Kipling. And it is not irrelevant to mention these mundane considerations, in a way that would be quite out of place in the case of Marlowe's glorification of a nascent capitalism; because Kipling's writing proceeds on the level of the ephemeral, and as a journalist none of his work achieves that artistic detachment from the actual that alone could make his ideas live as Marlowe's live. And one can, in passing, only deplore that Mr. Eliot should have supposed that Kipling is in some way worthy of attention (not only, one presumes, literary attention), and that we should be invited to admire this embodiment of a world that it has become so imperative to alter. Indeed, one could advance a convincing case for prescribing, at least for the duration, the writings of a man who speaks of the troops as revealing 'the intense

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selfishness of the lower classes', of officers whose virtue consists in God having 'arranged that a clean-run youth of the British middle classes shall, in the matter of backbone, brains, and bowels, surpass all other youths', and who says of the battle in which they are engaged that 'the bucketing went forward merrily'; but Mr. Eliot seems not to be acquainted with this aspect of Kipling, or perhaps he does not appreciate that this is, to say the least, not the most satisfactory attitude that can be adopted in the present situation.

Kipling's affiliations with the literary decadence are evident in his interest in language. The inventories of gems or scents or colours that one finds in Wilde are matched by his inventories and descriptions of mechanical components. As Théophile Gautier said, 'the decadent style is the last effort of language to express everything to the last extremity', and this accurately describes Kipling too. His verse and his prose are very carefully put together, and Mr. Eliot observes that he 'could manage even so difficult a form as the sestina'. Moreover it is perfectly true that Kipling had a knack of turning a phrase quite as effectively as Shaw or Whistler; he shared with them the contemporary love of verbal dexterity, and he had the advantage over them of possessing a vulgarer mind, a mind closer to the communal platitude. With the result that it is Kipling, rather than the accredited conversationalists of the decadence, who has added to our language so many of those 'toothsome amalgams of Americanisms and epigrams' that in some quarters are thought so rare an acquisition.

But perhaps the most significant fact about the *fin-de-siècle* writers was their spiritual isolation. Nearly all of them, in greater or less degree, were sexually abnormal, and the eroticism of much of their writing, and their endless quest after elaborate sensation, masked an inner disorder and desolation whose real nature they fought to conceal. The whole conduct of their lives, with its affectation of dandyism and elaborate inconsequence, was a device, perhaps subconsciously practised to a great extent, to make tolerable a lack of personal contact with others. Whether it be in the writings of Wilde or Beerbohm, Francis Thompson or Davidson, or even Bernard Shaw, the same uneasiness is evident, and they all reveal a similar lack of confidence in the validity of individual relationships. Indeed, the Ivory Tower was less an island of art standing out of a sea of social activity, than the very person of the isolated individual himself. And in this connection it is important to remember how many of the dandies of the decadence ended their lives in the sanctuary of the Roman Catholic Church; the organisation and the ritual enabled them to reconcile a longing for participation with a dependence on emotional indulgence. And it is impossible to read any quantity of Kipling's verse and prose without realizing immediately how similar was his case. 'What distinguishes Kipling from so many present-day writers', says Mr. Bonamy Dobrée (in *The Lamp and the Lute*), 'is precisely that he does not attempt to break down man's loneliness, seeing only futility in the balm of the "personal relation".' The moral of the tale *As Easy As A.B.C.* is that democracy

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implies solidarity and co-operation; the only reply to this aberration is to 'Order the guns and kill!' and then to retire in on oneself again. Unfortunately this blissful after-condition is threatened by a sudden resurrection of democracy, 'and when once it's a question of invasion of privacy, good-bye to right and reason in Illinois!' The same symptom is treated more pretentiously in one of the psychological tales, *In The Same Boat*, where the drug-addicts only escape into normality by pooling their moral resources and struggling together against the recurrent crises. But Kipling emphasises not so much their mutual dependence on each other's help, as that such co-operation is strictly conditional on their mental disorder. When they manage to reach normality, their sense of joint effort and attraction, which alone had enabled them to achieve it, vanish, and 'for the new-found life of him Conroy could not feel one flutter of instinct or emotion that turned to herward'. And in a somewhat similar story, *The Brushwood Boy*, the hero, whose 'school was not encouraged to dwell on its emotions', only becomes inveigled into a love-affair as a result of repeated telepathic communications with the lady in question; and when, eventually, they meet and have to go through with it (or rather Kipling has to go through with it), the dialogue is arch and almost embarrassing in its artificiality. In fact it was not that Kipling was isolated willingly or without regret, for one finds throughout his work the gravitation of one individual to another, even if this is described as the outcome of something abnormal; rather does one feel that an inner disability compelled him to this detachment from human sympathies, and that by way of compensation he forcibly identified himself with the larger structure of the British Empire, and later of the English tradition. The sentiments that might normally have fastened on individuals were frustrated, and so they drove Kipling almost frantically, and quite obstinately, into participation in the great abstraction. As others have pointed out, Kipling took his imperialism not only seriously but even religiously, and it gave him the security and also the emotional outlet that we have noticed in the conversion to Rome of the dandies. Nothing is so typically decadent about Kipling as this spiritual isolation, and Mr. Dobrée has justly remarked (though to illustrate quite another point) that the Empire is Kipling's Catholic Church.

And this brings one to the second of the two issues fundamental to an understanding of Kipling, and it bears directly on all that has been said so far. For Kipling's journalism, his interest in the craft of writing, his isolation, and his religious attachment to the Empire, are all fundamentally related to what I defined earlier as an atrophy of feeling. In his essay Mr. Eliot points out that 'the changes in his poetry, while they cannot be explained by any usual scheme of poetic development, can to some extent be explained by changes in his outward circumstances', and elsewhere he confesses that 'the critical tools which we are accustomed to use in analysing and criticising poetry do not seem to work'. And this leads Mr. Eliot to offer a number of explanations of which even he seems sceptical: such as

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the theory that Kipling, as distinct from other poets, intends his poems 'to *act*', or the theory, nowhere demonstrated, that he is 'an integral prose-and-verse writer'. But, were it not damaging to his general case, Mr. Eliot must surely have realized that development in art, and its critical analysis, is a matter of *emotional* growth, both extensively and intensively. And this is precisely what one fails to find either in Kipling's work as a whole or in his individual poems and stories. Like *Kim*, they are 'things imposed from without', most often unfolding a given situation or panorama. And this lack of internal development gives even his most dramatic tales a certain dustiness in the mouth; the gritty detachment of the style and the flashes of emotionalism are not controlled by any sense of artistic logic, but proceed from a mind of set ideas and narrow sympathies. In fact, as one studies his life, one sees Kipling moving from prejudice to prejudice, from one tactlessness to another, and one cannot see even in his private affairs any accession of maturity or judgment. This debility he shares, as has been suggested, with the other writers of the decadence; and, as in their case, this throttling (and I feel it was not altogether a personal responsibility) of normal spontaneity of feeling was accompanied by an increasing concern with the mere machine of his art. To Mr. Edmund Wilson (see *The Wound and the Bow*) this appears puzzling: 'It is the paradox of Kipling's career that he should have extended the conquests of his craftsmanship in proportion to the shrinking of the range of his dramatic imagination. As his responses to human beings became duller, his sensitivity to his medium increased'. But there is no paradox in this, so long as one is not deceived by Kipling's 'conquests of his craftsmanship'. Pesonally I find his skill no more remarkable that Somerset Maugham's or H. G. Wells'; indeed it rapidly developed into a formula that is all too easily and frequently copied. In very little of his work does one feel that he is doing much more than send his polished machine along the railroad that suits his whim of the moment; certainly it is a well-oiled and powerful locomotive, and it draws its freight of inanimate ideas and inanimate individuals unerringly to a pre-arranged destination; but of its nature it keeps to its rails, and observes the dictation of a time-table.

One of the inevitable outcomes of Kipling's lack of warm-blooded feeling (as distinct from his susceptibility to full-blooded emotion), is that his interest centres in things and ideas, and the internal working of his individuals is treated as a process distinct from character and personality. Seldom does one find any suggestion of innate life; the Irish Mulvaney, the Scots McTurk, the Anglo-Indian Mrs. Hauksbee, the American Zigler, or Pallant the English M.P., as well as the McAndrews and the troopers of the verse, are all of them actors on a carefully prepared stage-set; it is the drama they perform, rather than their own potentialities, that gives the story interest. And this explains the fact that Kipling appears to have had not much more interest in the thoughts and feelings of human beings than of animals and machines, or even in a pillow called Aunt Ellen. If one readily admits the virtuosity of the per-

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formance (for this seems simpler than to be niggling over such a triviality), yet one is still baffled to explain the interest in such stories as *The Maltese Cat* and *.007*; they only exemplify the kind of vulgarity that results from a concentration on the thing in itself. The whole undertaking was factitious; Kipling knew nothing at first hand about machines or animals, and his interest in them is essentially that of the advertizing journalist who eventually 'falls' for his own wares. And this enthusiasm for the machine, this interest in relationships in the abstract, is something quite different from the contemporary school of pylon-poets. It is one of the refuges of the shrinking sensibility, and carries little or no social significance. And the other side to this escape into the inanimate, is Kipling's resort to hysteria; the two attitudes represent complementary evasions of the problem of normal sympathetic existence.

The element of hysteria is pervasive. In one of two stories Kipling gets near to treating a story honestly, looking at it full-face; in *Without Benefit of Clergy*, for instance, the relationship between the British official and the Indian girl is almost satisfying. But at the crucial moment Kipling looks away; fever and cholera carry off the girl and their child, and violence breaks into what now seems to have been no more than an indulgent day-dream. Either some violent happening is brought in to shatter the glimpsed normality, or else Kipling dispenses with even the glimpses of normality, and presents instead various forms of aberration. On the most harmless level this takes the form of the practical joke. *Stalky & Co.* can be accepted, if only with difficulty, because one fondly supposes that most things are possible with the adolescent; but Kipling soon abandons even this degree of plausibility, and one finds exactly the same conduct glorified in the Regimental Mess. In *The Tie*, five officers beat up the civilian caterer, and this conduct is justified because all of them have been to the same school and thus his catering offence has disgraced not only the Mess but also the Alma Mater; and the tale ends with one of the officers 'thinking over the moral significance of Old School ties and the British Social fabric'. Or there is *The Honours Of War*, in which an officer, who has been assaulted by his brother officers for being serious about military theory, decides not to take ordinary action against the offenders; instead 'he cast away all shadow of his legal rights for the sake of a common or bear-garden rag—such a rag as if it came to the ears of the authorities would cost him his commission. They were saved, and their saviour was their equal and their brother. So they chaffed and reviled him as such, till he again squashed the breath out of them, and we others laughed louder than they'. Kipling seemed to value above all irresponsibility as between individuals (of the same sex, of course), perhaps as a relief from the tension of observing unquestioning loyalty to the Idea. And in *The Village That Voted The Earth Was Flat* his boyish thrill in the practical joke runs riot; the whole apparatus of the press, of advertising, and of the music-hall is manipulated to wreak vengeance on the offending Blimp, and in the end even the House of Commons has succumbed,

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'hysterical and abandoned'. But the thing to observe about this apparently harmless taste for the practical joke, about these extravaganzas on group irresponsibility and self-release, is that beneath it all there smoulders a potentiality for individual hysteria. A very large number of the tales deal with the mind on the edge of madness. Some of them are ordinary enough, and in *The Woman In His Life* the patient recovers as a result of developing a mawkish affection for a dog. (In contrast to Lawrence, Kipling had the kind of psychological insight that one picks up secondhand in the Smoke Room.) But most often these tales are not in the least harmless, and Kipling's taste for hysteria seems to uncover a deep longing for some similar violence of feeling in himself, some means of escaping into the ideal life of ruthless activity. Mr. Eliot is very wide of the point when he supposes that only 'those who do not believe in the existence of the Beast probably consider *The Mark Of The Beast* a beastly story'. This tale seems to me beastly (surely the pun was unnecessary), not because one disbelieves in the Beast, but because Kipling's attitude towards it is so equivocal. One cannot avoid feeling that he is mainly concerned with the opportunities for violent description that the Beast-theme offers, and also with the element of revenge that, so school-boyish an amusement in the tales already discussed, gradually emerges as a major principle in his philosophy. The leper, in this story, has branded Fleete with the mark of the beast, and gradually it transforms him altogether into a beast; in order to restore him back to humanity, the leper is captured and forced by torture to eradicate the mark. But the emphasis at the climax is all on the torture, and after carefully describing the instruments used, Kipling resorts melodramatically to a row of periods: 'Strickland shaded his eyes with his hands for a moment and then we got to work. This part is not to be printed . . .' And one retains a feeling that ruthlessness is the only solution, and that revenge with violence is sweet; and I find it strange that this appeals to an Anglo-Catholic.

Of course, for Kipling revenge *is* sweet, and most of his tales turn on feelings of revenge. In *Mary Postgate* Kipling writes with less detachment than in any of his tales that I have read. And as illustrating many of the points I have been making, not least Kipling's unsuitability for us at the present time, this story is worth consideration. Mary Postgate has been for a long time governess to Fowler, who joins up in the Flying Corps and is immediately killed on a trial flight; she comments: 'It's a great pity he didn't die in action after he had killed somebody'. She decides to burn all his belongings, and there follows one of Kipling's interminable and tasteless inventories, occupying a full page, describing the possessions that she collects for his pyre; the sense of loss is gradually intensified through this emphasis on the inanimate object, giving a hard unsympathetic feeling to the proceedings. Mary Postgate then goes out for a walk, and is present when a bomb dropped by a German plane kills a small girl. She returns to light her bonfire, and there, sitting at the foot of a tree with a broken

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back, is the pilot of the German machine which has just crashed. The story, as can be seen at once, is internally quite bogus; the whole thing is manipulated from the outside, and for preconceived purposes. The remaining pages simply describe the ecstasy of Mary Postgate as she waits to hear the death rattle of the German airman. In spite of the earlier comment, she now repeats to herself that 'Wynn was a gentleman who for no consideration would have torn little Edna into those vividly coloured strips and strings'; and so she waits, refusing the man any help, until with an 'increasing rapture' she perceives the end is near, and then 'she closed her eyes and drank it in', smiling. The importance of this is, I think, two-fold. Kipling quite candidly, like Mary Postgate, 'ceased to think, and gave himself up to feel' when he undertook this story; and it seems as if he had always been ready to indulge his feelings of revenge and hysteria when he could. But, unfortunately for him, the opportunity could only seldom arise for a man who, like himself, had done little but dip his pen into experiences of this kind. And this, the second interesting factor, explains why the story operates through the agency of a woman. On the whole, Kipling despised women; but in one or two of his tales he is glad to use them to vent feelings that he would be ashamed to attribute to a man, and above all to describe as being possible to himself. And one feels, in this story, that he is quite conscious of vicarious enjoyment in dealing with a woman whom he can safely allow to be contradictory and irrational. Always devoid of finer feeling and emotional discipline, Kipling here virtually extols these blemishes and, through the medium of Mary Postgate's calculated indulgence, turns the crude sensation over lovingly in his mouth. In this tale he does openly what for the most part he holds down by means of the harsh he-man prose. And in this respect he is not only one of the founders of modern journalism, but also of the modern school of literary toughness. Kipling's contemporary counterpart is Hemingway, who writes up-to-date Kiplingese, and who betrays, beneath the staccato machine-like prose, a similar coarseness of feeling that tends towards sentimentality on the one hand and towards brutishness on the other. What Kipling reveals, in every line he wrote, is a sensibility entirely devoid of moral discipline and artistic honesty; the only discipline he observes is that of his ideal Subaltern, the product of a 'school that was not encouraged to dwell on its emotions, but rather to keep in hard condition, and to avoid false quantities'. It is in products of this kind of training that one finds, almost invariably, an outward tough obstinacy protecting a soft centre of self-distrust and potential hysteria.

To go further into the matter, or to support these generalisations with detailed analysis, would be to perform a task out of all importance to its intrinsic importance. Kipling in fact seems to me neither so disgusting, for the most part, as he has been painted, nor worth the interest that Mr. Eliot seeks to encourage. And this particularly applies to his verse. Mr. Eliot admits to knowing no writer 'for whom poetry seems to have been more purely an instrument'; and the uses to which this instrument was put are no

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longer likely to appeal to people whose hopes and efforts are directed towards ensuring an outcome to the present struggle very different from the world that appealed to Kipling and indeed made him possible. We do not, on the whole, visualise the future 'in the shape of a semi-circle of buildings and temples projecting into a sea of dreams', which for Kipling represented 'the whole sweep and meaning of things and effort and origins throughout the Empire'; and the documents and experience on which we hope to work are at any rate not the volumes of *Punch*, 'from whose files I drew my modern working history'.

Certainly Mr. Eliot should never have lowered himself to advocating a revival of interest in such a writer. Of course one can see the attraction that Kipling might have for him: for Kipling was the popular success that Mr. Eliot will never be, he was anti-Liberal with a crude gusto that Mr. Eliot can never attempt to equal, and above all he rested within the Catholic Church of his Empire with a solid assurance and with a sense of fulfilment that will always be artistically denied to Mr. Eliot in his dealings with the Anglican brotherhood. If Mr. Eliot has been undoubtedly the most important name in literature during the period between the two wars, this has entailed a sacrifice that he seems decreasingly willing to make; that side of him that confesses to a taste for music-hall and Camembert, for cats and for Douglas Credit, in short his strain of the dilletante, even one might say of the decadent, leads him to look wistfully at the confident and unabashed vulgarity of Kipling. Perhaps above all it is this unattainable mastery and this security within the enveloping aura of the larger structure that appeals to one so fraught with doubt and insecurity:

> 'So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
> Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—
> Trying to learn to use new words, and every attempt
> Is a wholly new start, and a different kind of failure . . .
> . . . There is only the fight to recover what has been lost
> And found and lost again and again: and now, under conditions
> That seem unpropitious'.

Kipling lacked this kind of honesty and hence he lacked any sense of this kind of problem; through a partly deliberate thickening of the hide he convinced himself that 'The game is more than the player of the game, And the ship is more than the crew'. In his poetry, at least, Mr. Eliot has never sought refuge by renouncing the integrity of his personal response and the guidance of his matured sensibility; and up to the present he has not succumbed to the appeal of the Thing and of the System, the lure of the Ship and the Game.

BORIS FORD.

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DEMIGODS & PICKPOCKETS

THE AUGUSTAN MYTH IN SWIFT AND ROUSSEAU

THE term 'Augustan' as applied to the culture of the early eighteenth century conveniently describes (among other things) a prevailing attitude towards classical antiquity. Since this attitude was part of the climate of thought in which the writers I am going to discuss lived and worked, I shall begin by referring to some of its characteristics, though without any attempt to trace its development in the course of the century. First there is the tradition of classical study going back far beyond the Augustan age. 'It is not easy for us', says Christopher Dawson, 'to realize the strength of this classical tradition. For three hundred years men had lived a double life. The classical world was the standard of their thought and conduct. In a sense, it was more real to them than their own world, for they had been taught to know the history of Rome better than that of England or modern Europe; to judge their literature by the standard of Quintilian, and to model their thought on Cicero and Seneca. Ancient history was history in the absolute sense, and the ages that followed were a shadowy and unreal world which could only be rationalized by being related in some way to the classical past'. (*Edward Gibbon*, in *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1934, pp. 162-3). To this pre-occupation with the documents of classical antiquity, Augustanism adds the conscious and consciously successful emulation of the 'best' periods of ancient civilization, and the conviction, growing more rigorous and dogmatic with the Enlightenment, that true civilization is a matter of occasional islands in a sea of darkness. To quote Mr. Dawson again, 'he (Gibbon) believed like Voltaire that the human race had experienced a few moments of rare felicity, relatively equal to one another, but separated by gulfs of barbarism and ignorance. In Voltaire's words, 'Every age has produced heroes and politicians, every people has experienced revolutions, all history is almost equal for those who only wish to store their memories with facts. But whoever thinks, or (what is more rare) whoever possesses taste, only counts four centuries in the history of the world?' These four centuries are the classical age of Greece, the Augustan age of Rome, the age of the Renaissance, in Italy, and the age of Louis XIV'. (*op. cit.*, p. 173). And again, 'he (Gibbon) was conscious of the European achievement and he felt himself to be a member of a society that was not inferior in culture and politeness to that of classical Rome. He stood on the summit of the Renaissance achievement and looked back over the waste of history to ancient Rome, as from one mountain top to another'. (p. 164).

Such a powerful and omnipresent 'myth' could not fail to have its influence even on those who were out of sympathy with, and in

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more or less open revolt against, the prevailing tendencies of their age, and it is the purpose of this essay to examine the use to which the notion of classical antiquity is put by two of the most notable dissidents of the age, Swift and Rousseau. Some notable similarities will appear through the great and obvious differences of temperament and background. It may be as well to insist on some of the differences to begin with, in case the confrontation of the two writers should suggest that they are being treated indifferently as raw material for a particular thesis. In the first place, I take it for granted that Rousseau is incomparably the more important figure in the history of European culture. Moreover much of his treatment of antiquity forms an integral part of his most mature and valuable thought, and with that I shall not be concerned. My purpose makes it necessary for me to give special prominence to that side of his treatment of antiquity which reflects personal maladjustment, and it is there that he comes closest to Swift, in whom there is nothing to correspond to the positive side of Rousseau's achievement as a thinker. On the other hand there are isolated passages in Swift which express the attitude that is in a measure common to both with greater power and intensity than *that particular* attitude is expressed anywhere in Rousseau.

The conventional Augustan attitude, in spite of its strength and its value in imparting 'that sense of living membership in a great tradition and a classical order which Gibbon with all his limitations of spiritual vision still possessed' (Dawson, *op. cit.*, p. 180), was not so firmly rooted that it could not be twisted to quite un-Augustan purposes by a writer out of tune with the society in which he found himself. The picture of antiquity it presented had some of the flimsiness of an arbitrarily selective construction—the notion of a 'classical' period is itself arbitrary in a way incompatible with a truly historical attitude. The vitality it had was to a great extent infused into it by those who wholeheartedly lived an Augustan life and projected their own interests into the age they idealized. And this process of projection was largely carried on through the medium of creative literature—translation or adaptation in the manner of Pope's *Imitations of Horace*. Anyone who cared to use the same selective and fundamentally unhistorical method for different ends might be expected to produce disconcerting results. And that is what Swift did. On the face of it nothing could be more respectably Augustan than the plan of the *Battle of the Books*—a satirical and mock-heroic contribution to a fashionable controversy. But the result is that, if we were to follow where Swift leads us, very little at all would be left of the whole subject of the controversy. Relatively slight though the *Battle of the Books* is, it affords an example of Swift's capacity to 'make the Augustan positives look like negatives' (Leavis, *Revaluation*, p. 110). What Swift does succeed in conveying is the strength of his revulsion from the pedantry and malignity he attributes to the moderns. The unsubstantiality of what he sets up in opposition to them is a close parallel to the lifelessness that characterizes the Houyhnhnms in contrast to the Yahoos.

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So much is obvious; but my present purpose is to point out what use Swift is able to make of antiquity as a symbol for the expression of his disgust at all that is typified by the Spider of his apologue. All that Swift needs to do is to cut off the classics from the communication with the life of his own day that was furnished by the conscious 'Augustanizing' and self-projecting I have mentioned; and he was left with a symbol that peculiarly fitted his purposes through combining the characters of emotive potency and absence of any positive or definite content. It would be impossible to form any clear idea from the *Battle of the Books* what the ancients did stand for; 'honey and wax', 'sweetness and light', are the merest counters. But we know that they are designed to stand for 'a good thing',[1] and the prestige of antiquity together with the force of Swift's presentation are sufficient to produce the requisite effect on us.

It is this intensity divorced from definite content that Swift often calls in the associations of classical antiquity to promote, though commonly with rather more appearance of particular reference than in the *Battle of the Books*. An illuminating instance occurs in the poem *To Stella Visiting me in my Sickness*. The treatment of honour in this poem is typical of Swift's mode of presenting the values in which his feelings are most deeply involved. Direct definition is despised, and Swift plunges into the undifferentiated but emotionally charged feeling of totality.

> But (not in wranglings to engage
> With such a stupid vicious age)
> If honour I would here define,
> It answers faith in things divine . . .
> Those numerous virtues which the tribe
> Of tedious moralists describe,
> And by such various titles call,
> True honour comprehends them all.

The next paragraph of the poem dissociates true honour from its sordid and false social counterparts ('when a whore in her vocation Keeps punctual to an assignation', etc.), and Swift then continues:

> In points of honour to be try'd ,
> All passions must be laid aside;
> Ask no advice, but think alone;
> Suppose the question not your own.
> How shall I act? is not the case;
> But how would Brutus in my place?
> In such a cause would Cato bleed?
> And how would Socrates proceed?

[1] 'May we not, for example, be affected with the promise of a *good thing*, though we have not an idea of what it is?'—Berkeley, *Principles of Human Knowledge*, Introduction, Section 20.

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The moralist's stock figures are treated as symbols, not as flesh and blood; and they are suited for Swift's purpose because of their combination of remoteness and traditional prestige. The use made of this prestige is brought home by the next paragraph, in which Swift plunges back into the congenial attitude of revulsion from the actual.

> Drive all objections from your mind,
> Else you relapse to human-kind;
> Ambition, avarice, and lust,
> And factious rage, and breach of trust, ...
> Envy, and cruelty, and pride,
> Will in your tainted heart preside.

Antiquity is treated in a similar vein and in a similar context in Part III of *Gulliver's Travels* (chh. 7 and 8). The art of deflation is practised on such of the traditions of antiquity as Swift finds it convenient to reject in order to create a sort of moral vacuum around the reputations he does endorse. '(Alexander) assured me upon his Honour that he was not poisoned, but dyed of a Fever by excessive Drinking'; and by way of contrast: 'I desired that the Senate of *Rome* might appear before me in one large Chamber, and a modern Representative, in Counterview, in another. The first seemed to be an Assembly of Heroes and Demy-Gods; the other a Knot of Pedlars, Pick-pockets, Highwaymen and Bullies'. And the bloodless stock figures of 'virtue' appear again: 'I had the Honour to have much Conversation with *Brutus*; and was told that his Ancestor *Junius, Socrates, Epaminondas, Cato* the Younger, Sir *Thomas More* and himself, were perpetually together: a *Sextumvirate* to which all the Ages of the World cannot add a Seventh'. The selective and unhistorical treatment of the civilization of the past which Swift found current, and which became canonized in the view of Voltaire quoted at the beginning of this paper, was pushed by him to the point where a handful of 'virtuous' heroes look down in disdain on a world of irretrievable corruption. (Who can believe that Socrates and More at least did not soon tire of the somewhat limited resources of the company in which Swift placed them?) But though antiquity itself can be stomached only in a rigidly selective presentation, yet 'I was chiefly disgusted with modern History'. The paragraphs the first of which opens thus do indeed convey little but a schematization of disgust, culminating in the pragmatic justification of the corruption he describes: 'that positive, confident, restive Temper, which Virtue infused into Man, was a perpetual Clog to publick Business'.

It is in the passage from *Gulliver's Travels* that the strain in Swift's writings that I have tried to trace brings him closest to Rousseau's *Discours sur les Sciences et les Arts*. This work is of course a highly rhetorical and an immature specimen of Rousseau's thought, but is all the more significant as a reflection of one side of Rousseau's temperament. In one of the most famous passages of the *Confessions* he describes the state of excitement into which he

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was thrown by reading the announcement of the prize essay of the Academy of Dijon: Si le progrès des Sciences et des Arts a contribué à épurer les moeurs. And a revulsion from contemporary society comparable to that of Swift (though much less inhibited) has resulted in a similar selection of symbols. The treatment throughout is a schematic-moralistic one, leaning heavily on highly emotive and undefined key-words, notably 'vertu' (*cf.* Swift's 'virtue', and in the poem quoted earlier 'honour'). The comparison of the senate with a 'modern Representative' recurs: 'l'assemblée de deux cents hommes vertueux, dignes de commander à Rome et de gouverner la terre'. Socrates and Cato again make their appearance. Sparta is called a 'république de demi-dieux' because of the 'vertu' of its citizens.

The ways by which Swift and Rousseau arrived at these similar uses of the notion of classical antiquity were widely different. Moreover for Rousseau the stage represented by the *First Discourse* was a transitory one, though its attitude continues to be one of the strains running through his work. What is expressed in the *First Discourse* is overwhelmingly negative, but the moralistic revulsion from contemporary society was more closely associated with constructive ideals in Rousseau than in Swift. For an idealized Sparta and Rome were only part of the weapons with which Rousseau assailed eighteenth century French society, and they were associated in his development with something which had more body and actuality—his native city of Geneva. It was in his earliest years that Plutarch's Greeks and Romans had come to stand for an exalted 'vertu' that counteracted the eighteenth-century romances which had given material for the day-dreams of the sickly and hypochondriacal child—'Plutarque surtout devint ma lecture favorite . . . je préférai bientôt Agésilas, Brutus, Aristide, à Orondate, Artamène, et Juba'. And in making this use of Plutarch Rousseau was not following a wholly idiosyncratic course; moralistic idealization resting on Plutarch had its basis in the attitude of the rather consciously out-of-date Calvinism of eighteenth-century Geneva, and Rousseau's own father had given him the cue. As the son, no doubt not without rhetorical idealization was later to express it: 'Je le vois encore, vivant du travail de ses mains, et nourrissant son âme des vérités les plus sublimes. Je vois Tacite, Plutarque et Grotius, mêlés devant lui avec les instruments de son métier'. (*Discours sur l'Inégalité,* Dédicace).

In Rousseau's mature work, the Rome-Sparta theme, made more substantial and less arbitrary and rhetorical through the sobering influence of Montesquieu, and deepened by Rousseau's strong Platonism, came to form one of the bases of his constructive thought; meanwhile in its moralistic and satiric use it brought him, as I have tried to show, closer perhaps to Swift than to any other author of the century. The comparison may be documented a little further. Rousseau shares Swift's aversion for modern history, that tangled, sordid and—the crucial point—inescapably living flesh-and-blood fabric: 'Quant à moi, qui n'aime à considérer que les exemples

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dont l'humanité s'intruise et s'honore: moi qui ne sais voir parmi mes contemporains que des maîtres insensibles et des peuples gémissants, des guerres qui n'intéressent personne et désolent tout le monde, des armées immenses en temps de paix et sans effet en temps de guerre, des ministres toujours occupés pour ne rien faire, des traités mystérieux sans objet, des alliances longtemps négociées et rompues le lendemain, enfin des sujets d'autant plus méprisés que le prince est plus puissant: je tire le rideau sur ces objets de douleur et de désolation; et ne pouvant soulager nos maux, j'évite au moins de les contempler.

'Mais je me plais à tourner les yeux sur ces vénérables images de l'antiquité où je vois les hommes élevés par de sublimes institutions au plus haut degré de grandeur et de vertus ou puisse atteindre la sagesse humaine, etc'. (*Political Writings of Rousseau,* ed. Vaughan, vol. 1, p. 314).

There are germs here of much that is important in Rousseau's philosophy, but it is the first paragraph, with its sense of aimless sordid wasted activity, that I want to insist on here, in contrast to the mere formula or gesture that passes muster for a positive corrective. 'J'évite de les contempler'—it is this strong feeling of revulsion from the actualities of life that has, we cannot help thinking, conditioned the way in which Rousseau sees the scene he presents so vividly. It is perhaps not impossible to get a fair notion of what Rousseau means by 'vertu' in such passages as this and the numerous ones in which it occurs in the *First Discourse.* (Schinz has made an elaborate discrimination of three different senses, which I feel to be rather imposed on Rousseau in virtue of a preconceived view of the various elements in European culture than drawn from Rousseau's own work). But the immediate impression is surely that it is a formula which derives its emotive potency from that to which it stands in contrast, and it is only to be expected that Rousseau in his rhetorical peroration to the *Discourse* should renounce any attempt to give an account of this 'science sublime des âmes simples', and to ask: 'Tes principes ne sont-ils pas gravés dans tous les coeurs?'

Of a piece with the characteristics discussed is the anti-metaphysical tendency which Rousseau like Swift gives to his moralism in the First Discourse: 'Qui voudrait passer sa vie à de stériles contemplations, si chacun, ne consultant que les devoirs de l'homme et les besoins de la nature, n'avait de temps que pour la patrie, pour les malheureux, et pour ses amis? Sommes-nous donc faits pour mourir attachés sur les bords du puits ou la vérité s'est retirée?'

The parallels drawn in this paper may not add up to very much. I have found that they illuminate both writers for me, but such coincidence as there may be does not cover more than a part of what makes either important. If any wider inference is to be drawn from the comparison, it is perhaps the one suggested earlier, that there was a certain instability, arising out of its unhistorical nature, in the Augustan 'myth' which lent itself to being twisted to the unorthodox purposes of Swift and Rousseau.

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'MEASURE FOR MEASURE'[1]

MOST writing that has attained a certain level of complexity has moral implications. The writer may not, in many cases, be altogether aware of them. Great poems may draw their inspiration exclusively from moments of intense and unrelated experience; and indeed, since no such poem can be conceived without intensity of this kind, these moments may be said to have autonomous, independent value. But this is not in the long run enough. Sooner or later, at least in a civilized society, the poet is faced with the problem of putting his experiences together, of moulding them into some intelligible organic structure; and this work of evaluation and selection calls for standards and so, in the broadest sense, for a morality. It is only by recognising the presence of this need in Shakespeare that we can grasp the peculiar spirit of *Measure for Measure*.

That spirit is essentially, uncompromisingly moral. The need for constant standards and for their enforcement by the civil power is everywhere stated and underlined. It is to strengthen it that the Duke, at the beginning of the play, calls upon Angelo; and even Claudio, who is most directly interested in the loosening of bonds that condemn him to immediate death, agrees that the sentence passed upon him is just. When Lucio asks him why he has been arrested, his reply is quite unequivocal. His plight, he says, proceeds—

> From too much liberty, my Lucio, liberty;
> As surfeit is the father of much fast,
> So every scope by the immoderate use
> Turns to restraint. Our natures do pursue,
> Like rats that ravin down their proper bane,
> A thirsty evil; and when we drink we die. (I, ii)

Claudio's speech, however, does more than confirm the necessary ruthlessness of the law. Its verbal qualities point, in the expression, to the motive that compelled the assertion of that ruthlessness. The linguistic power of *Measure for Measure*, far from expanding easily into lyricism or rhetoric, is subordinated to a supple bareness and concentrated most often upon an intense underlining of the value of single words. This does not mean that the effect is necessarily simple. No word in Claudio's speech is logically superfluous, but more than one is, in its context, surprising. The verb 'ravin', for instance, suggests bestial, immoderate feeding, and therefore 'appetite', but the next line proceeds, through a 'thirsty evil', to transfer the meta-

[1]This essay, originally planned as a lecture, was written away from England before the discussion on this play in *Scrutiny* (January, 1942) came to hand. It is offered in the belief that something useful can still be said on this very intricate subject.

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phor to drinking; the shift of the image, and the sharp focussing of impressions by which it is accompanied, are characteristic of Shakespeare's mature art. The effect is to transfer attention almost imperceptibly from the idea of Claudio's first condemnation to another which, without directly presuming to question the first, yet profoundly modifies it. The repellent impression of animal appetite summoned up by 'ravin' and maintained by the reference, at once contemptuous and loathing, to 'rats' is unobtrusively transformed into an evocation of natural thirst; the evil remains and is uncondoned, but its relation to the normal human situation has gone through a decisive change. The whole passage is designed to stress the deep-seated contradiction involved in the very nature of passion. Human nature, Claudio says, is driven to pursue the object of its desire like a rat whose natural or 'proper' thirst impels it to swallow the 'bane' which must inevitably, once swallowed, kill it. Passion, coveted and pursued in full 'liberty' beyond the limits strictly imposed by the moral law, leads fatally to destruction; but—and here Shakespeare restores the balance necessary to his conception—it is a bane proper to humanity, something which craves free satisfaction as inevitably as the thirsty animal craves for water and which man cannot therefore, even if he should so desire, hope to suppress.

The reservations implied in Claudio's confession of guilt gain fresh power, a little further on, from one of the few speeches in *Measure for Measure* in which strong and simple emotion triumphs over the discipline habitually imposed upon it. When Lucio brings news of Claudio's arrest to Isabella he describes her brother's sin in lines where intensity of feeling breaks with tremendous effect through the deliberate, restrained tonelessness of so much of this play:

> Your brother and his lover have embraced:
> As those that feed grow full; as blossoming time,
> That from the seedness the bare fallow brings
> To teeming foison; even so her plenteous womb
> Expresseth his full tilth and husbandry. (I, iv).

The writing of such a speech implies new possibilities in Shakespeare's art. Not only are various of its images of fertility vastly developed in *King Lear* and later plays, but the very movement of the verse is more rich and complex in the command of words behind 'seed*ness*' and '*plenteous* womb', in the concentration that can use both 'feed' and 'husbandry' to express the fertility of passion. The effect is to give to the natural instinct behind Claudio's sin a full and triumphant expression. The bane is, after all, inescapably 'proper' to humanity. His love for Julia, expressly related in the pregnant imagery of these lines to the fulness of the harvest and to the physical satisfaction that follows eating, is as inevitable as the return of the fertile 'blossoming time' to the dead, bare fallow; and, like that return, it is life-giving, 'plenteous', 'teeming'. This vitality is reflected in a fresh concreteness of expression. Both the main images of fulfilment—the gleaning of the harvest and the 'ful-

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ness' that accompanies feasting—have already been used by Shakespeare, more or less tentatively, in the Sonnets and in *Troilus and Cressida*. In the Sonnets, however, the effect of such a couplet as:

> For where is she so fair whose unear'd womb
> Disdains the tillage of thy husbandry? (Sonnet III).

is still relatively conventional, still unsupported by any real weight of sensuous apprehension; whilst in *Troilus* the imagery of appetite, far from suggesting satisfaction, passes most typically through satiety to revulsion. Here, on the other hand, the positive and concrete elements prevail; and their triumph points to an experience which, although never completely assimilated into the moral order postulated by *Measure for Measure,* calls insistently for a recognition which later plays will give it. In the light of the undeniable vitality expressed in Lucio's lines the problem of 'liberty' in its relation to the moral order acquires a new urgency. It represents an intuition which must not indeed overstep the restraining limits of the law but which must somehow, in the interests, of harmony, be freely incorporated in them.

The balance thus held in the individual utterance is consistently maintained in Shakespeare's handling of the social background of the play. The presentation of Vienna in *Measure for Measure* is purposely, inevitably grim; so much so that the 'comic' scenes representing the street life of the city have often been criticised as pedestrian and even degrading performances. Judgments of this kind ignore the moral balance which the play is so concerned to hold. The key to a proper understanding of these passages lies in their unquestionable moral seriousness. A society in the advanced stages of moral dissolution is necessarily ugly. The physical beastliness upon which Shakespeare so insistently dwells is a direct and natural consequence of spiritual decay. Its cause is the gradual corrosion, within Viennese society, of all moral values. Once these values have been undermined the dissolution—the 'ravening' process of self-destruction—follows logically enough from the truths already announced by Claudio; the 'bane', once swallowed, leads inevitably to death. The necessary consequences of allowing complete 'liberty' to the satisfaction of bodily 'appetite' is the spread of disease, physical as well as moral, from the individual to the mass of society. The presentation of such a process is naturally anything but comic. The jesting conversation of the courtiers and men of the world in this play turns insistently, even monotonously, upon the threat of sexual disease; but beneath the levity which springs from long familiarity there appears a deeper note of fear. The courtiers of Vienna are aware of the frightening moral emptiness which their maladies imply. When one of his friends observes to Lucio—'Thou art always figuring diseases in me; but thou art full of error—I am sound', he replies with at least a hint of the profound religious seriousness which animates the play—'Nay, not as one would say healthy; but so sound as things that are hollow: impiety has made a feast of

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thee' (I, ii). Beneath this hollowness, which is more than physical, lies that fear of death which is in *Measure for Measure* the beginning of wisdom.

Here too, however, dissolution and death are only one side of the picture. The 'bane' that has poisoned Viennese society is still, to return once more to that key phrase of Claudio's, 'proper' to it. It is still a consequence, however tainted by human perversity, of natural human failings. This is a fact with which the law itself must eventually come to terms. When Angelo, in his determination to remove the causes of social disintegration, proceeds to enforce the statutes by pulling down the familiar houses of resort and punishing those who trafficked in them, he challenges instincts which lie at the very root of man's normal nature. The real problem is once more that of liberty. To enforce the law without convincing the guilty that they should freely accept it, that their mode of life involves a tragic neglect of spiritual possibilities which can only lead to ruin, is ultimately to deny all moral responsibility; and this is precisely what Angelo seems forced to do. In the examination of Pompey by Escalus, Shakespeare sets before us in concrete form some of the intricacies which human nature imposes upon the necessary administration of justice. Pompey, challenged by his judge, makes no attempt to deny his trade. He simply denies the utility of trying to suppress it. 'Truly, sir', he says, 'I am a poor fellow that would live'. The discussion which follows proceeds in the most direct and telling simplicity:

ESCALUS: How would you live, Pompey? by being a bawd? What do you think of the trade, Pompey? is it a lawful trade?
POMPEY: If the law would allow it, sir.
ESCALUS: But the law will not allow it, Pompey; nor it shall not be allow'd in Vienna.
POMPEY: Does your lordship mean to geld and splay all the youth in the city? (II, i).

The point is crudely, even cruelly made. but its implications are tremendously serious. To re-establish the law in Vienna is, as Shakespeare has shown us in the most concrete form, vitally necessary. Failure to deal with the disease of which Pompey is a symptom involves the consequences so vividly presented in Lucio and his associates; it involves the collapse of society under the double burden of physical disease and moral dissolution. Yet—and here once more is the fundamental question raised by *Measure for Measure*—upon what human instinct, if Pompey is right, can the law be based? To what reality in man can it finally appeal in the effort to make itself, not merely feared without understanding, but accepted with free respect? For Pompey, and for the great unconscious mass of humanity, the law is no more than a matter of verbal caprice. The trade of bawd is 'unlawful' in Pompey's eyes, not because it is degrading or destructive of man's true dignity, but simply because the law in its mysteriousness 'will not allow it'. He accepts the

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prohibition, because he accepts the authority which has imposed it, but he makes no attempt to understand it. He accepts it, indeed, as no more than a transitory caprice. There are men like Angelo—so it appears to him—who, having themselves no experience of carnal desire, are obstinate in repressing the desires of others; but their obstinacy, failing to appeal to more natural instincts, is bound eventually to founder in the face of permanent realities: 'Does your lordship mean to geld and splay all the youth of the city?' The question remains unanswered for the simple reason that no character in *Measure for Measure*—except possibly the Duke when, at the end of the play, he has the whole of its moral experience behind him—who could conceivably answer it. The others, and more especially Angelo, have no respect for the liberty which all genuine morality presupposes; while the Duke himself only comes gradually to realize the difficulties to which the concession of liberty can give rise. These difficulties bring him face to face with the question of moral sanctions. The force of Pompey's argument depends in the last analysis upon the definition of love as a transitory physical appetite. If it is no more, if there is no superior scale of moral values upon which the restraining law may depend, its application becomes an impossible and baseless imposition which man's more permanent instincts will eventually overthrow. That is one side of the question. The other insists, with equal force, that the law must be imposed in defence of the very structure of society; and this, as events show, is difficult too. To find for the law a necessary sanction in experience without depriving it of the firmness and impartiality upon which its maintenance depends is the task which ultimately faces the Duke in *Measure for Measure*.

Before he has gained the necessary experience to carry it out, however, the Duke has to learn from two simplified solutions of the moral problem. His own error had been an excessive faith in 'liberty', in permitting human instincts to grow uncurbed until they threatened to undermine the fabric of society. His abdication, besides clearing the way for Angelo's rigid enforcement of the letter of the law, brings him into contact, through Isabella, with a virtue whose perfection implies a complete withdrawal from human affairs. Both Angelo and Isabella have their own way of imposing 'law' upon the flesh: ways which are found to be inadequate and indeed, by a strange irony, mutually destructive, but through the contemplation of which the Duke gains some at least of the understanding upon which true justice rests.

The attempt to enforce the law by delegating authority to Angelo fails. It fails because Pompey's estimate of the Deputy's character, springing as it does from the depth of his instinctive normality, is fundamentally just. Angelo's peculiar failure lies ultimately in a lack of self-knowledge. He believes that he has, by the force of his own virtue, dominated passion, where he has in reality simply passed it by. The underlying weakness of his character is brought out, step by step, in his treatment of Claudio. His reply to Escalus opens with a statement that is unexceptionable, upon which the

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whole administration of the law depends:

> 'Tis one thing to be tempted, Escalus;
> Another thing to fall (II, i).

If the moral law is to be enforced at all it must be assumed that man has the power, by the free exercise of firm self-control, to check his own disorderly impulses. This is true, but it is not all the truth. The distinction made by Angelo needs to be drawn, but it must be made with a full grasp of the human issues involved. That Angelo has no such grasp is persistently suggested, not only by Pompey, but by all those around him. Lucio, whose remarks are so often revealing, describes him as a man whose blood is 'very snow-broth', who 'rebates and blunts' his '*natural* edge'—the adjective is important—by opposing to it an abstract discipline conceived in 'the mind', in 'study and fast', and ultimately powerless before what Escalus calls 'the resolute acting of the blood' (II, i): Angelo's inexperience is enough to disqualify him as a lawgiver. Ignorant of the promptings of passion, he deceives himself into the belief that he has felt, understood, and mastered them. That is what is implied in the off-hand and unsubstantiated claim with which he backs his rejection of Escalus' plea for Claudio:

> You may not so extenuate his offence,
> For I have had such faults. (II, i).

In this phrase, perhaps for the first time, Angelo's confidence reveals itself as based on an ignorance of what human motives really are. Men may be and often are carried impulsively into courses which their moral principles cannot countenance. To offer the necessary resistance to these impulses requires maturity, balance, self-knowledge—all the things which Angelo, for all his reputation of virtue, hopelessly lacks. He condemns Claudio, in reality, because he finds his crime inconceivable; and for the same reason he eventually falls. The instrument of his fall is a further and more sinister development. Self-deception is only the first stage in Angelo's progress. The ignorance upon which his virtue is so precariously based can turn, with catastrophic suddenness, into the complications of vice. *Measure for Measure* is not the only play in which Shakespeare suggests the possibility of a development of this kind. In his preoccupation with the conflict between passion and the controlling reason, he is often moved to admire the man who seems to have dominated his lower instincts. 'Give me'—says Hamlet to Horatio —'the man that is not passion's slave'; and his desire is simply an extension into the personal sphere of Ulysses' abstract insistence upon 'degree'. Yet here too there is another side of the picture. Reason that is not fully harmonized with a rich and free emotional life may easily become an imposition concealing every kind of dangerous thwarted instinct; and *Measure for Measure* is only one of several plays written at this time in which Shakespeare found that balance difficult to maintain. The hero, the man born free of passion, is evidently to be admired and envied; but his freedom generally

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implies a coldness, an indifference to feeling that only partially covers latent impulses of cruelty and domination. The position is perhaps most clearly stated in one of the Sonnets:

> They that have power to hurt and will do none,
> That do not do the thing they most do show,
> Who moving others, are themselves as stone,
> Unmoving, cold, and to temptation slow;
> They rightly do inherit heaven's graces . . .
>
> (Sonnet XCIV).

The application to Angelo is obvious. In him too there is a stony virtue which depends, though he does not realize it, upon the innate sluggishness of the blood, upon the fact that he has been from birth 'cold' and 'to temptation slow'. More important still, he too has 'power to hurt' and exercises it implacably against Claudio; and, most significantly of all, the blamelessness upon which his claim to judge rests is a deception, a concealment of deeper and more unrealized instincts. Angelo, like the man in the Sonnet, does not do the thing he most does show. The deception is not less dangerous for being, at the outset, unconscious. Indeed, it is more dangerous, for the ignorance that covers it makes it peculiarly liable to perversion. The forces of passion, denied all natural expression by a man who has never felt their true force, can easily take control of the unprepared will. Angelo's self-control is of the kind which can turn, almost without warning, into a desire for domination which aims directly and in complete ruthlessness at the goal appointed by his lower instincts.

This is precisely what happens when he meets Isabella. When he finally becomes aware of his feelings towards her he expresses them in terms that are pregnant with sexuality and self-will:

> I have begun;
> And now I give my sensual race the rein;
> Fit thy consent to my sharp appetite;
> Lay by all nicety and prolixious blushes,
> That banish what they sue for; redeem thy brother
> By yielding up thy body to my will. (II, iv).

The most remarkable thing about this speech of Angelo's is the completeness with which it accepts the impulse to evil. In this acceptance we may detect a most significant development from the mood of *Hamlet*. 'Law', as conceived in *Measure for Measure*, is clearly connected with 'reason' in the earlier play. It is 'reason' made more personal, more immediately realized, in answer to the growing feeling for what we may call the flesh. In *Hamlet*, references to the flesh are invariably references of loathing, as though its only activity were to disrupt the abstract perfection implied in the control of 'reason'. There is little sense of that rightness and necessity of passion which we have seen so streesed in the story of Claudio and Julia. The presence of such a sense in *Measure for Measure* profoundly affects, not only that play's conception of the moral law,

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but also by a necessary implication its presentation of evil in revolt against that law. Both are more concretely, and so more personally, conceived. The sense of evil expresses itself in Angelo, not in the vague, scarcely defined disgust of Hamlet, but through a conscious and determined orientation of the will in which the whole personality is involved not less fully than it had been in Claudio's passion. It is just this recognition of the personal that gives the play its eminently moral character. For it is not sufficient to say that Angelo is weak-willed or that his normal self-control has been undermined by irrational forces. It is rather that the passion to which he has, in his self-ignorance, denied all natural expression has now taken complete control of his will, which reveals itself as forcibly in the direction of carnal desire as it had previously been affirmed in moral rigour and 'firm abstinence'. Thus impelled it proceeds, with a remorseless internal logic which will become more and more characteristic of Shakespeare's tragic figures, along the path that leads to destruction.

Isabella's virtue, though standing at the other extreme from that of Angelo's, is related to it by a common foundation in inexperience. When the play opens she is about to take her vows of profession as a nun. The fact is in itself significant. Virtue in *Measure for Measure* is habitually on its guard, habitually defending itself by withdrawal against the temptations that so insistently beset it. Isabella's opening dialogue with the nun who accompanies her stresses the note of retreat and mortification. Considering the rules to which she is shortly to submit herself she desires an even stricter seclusion from the world:

ISABELLA: And have you nuns no further privileges?
FRANCISCA: Are these not large enough?
ISABELLA: Yes, truly. I speak not as desiring more;
But rather willing a more strict restraint
Upon the sisterhood, the votarists of Saint Clare.
(I, iv).

It is significant, too, in view of all that is to follow, that Francisca goes on to emphasize one particular feature of the enclosure:

When you have vow'd, you must not speak with men,
But in the presence of the prioress;
Then, if you speak, you must not show your face.

To grasp the spirit in which this retirement is conceived, we must see it in relation to the necessity for enforcing the law at any cost. Virtue and chastity need to be restored in a world where every natural instinct threatens to violate them; and just as the law-giver must defend them by imposing 'the needful bits and curbs to headstrong weeds', so must the individual preserve it in himself even at the cost of renouncing a society which seems to incline almost universally to corruption. Isabella, by entering the convent, is simply carrying to its logical extreme the fulfilment of a moral duty.

More restraint, however, is not enough. Isabella's acceptance of this duty, necessary as it is, may spring from a false simplicity no

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less fatal than Angelo's self-ignorance. Her own virtue is to be severely tested in the light of wider obligations. Before she has taken her vows, human claims of a kind which no seclusion can solve call her away from the cloister. Lucio brings the news that her brother, at the point of death, places his last hope in her intervention. The terms in which this hope is expressed by Claudio himself are an indication of the difficulties, so far unsuspected by Isabella, which beset virtue in this play:

> bid her assay him:
> I have great hope in that; for in her youth
> There is a prone and speechless dialect
> Such as move men; besides, she hath prosperous art
> When she will play with reason and discourse,
> And well she can persuade. (I, ii).

The qualities upon which Claudio relies are not, typically enough, those of simple virtue. The gift of persuasion which is so strong in Isabella has little to do with the vocation that has brought her to the cloister. It is simply an unalienable and, as the event will show, a highly dangerous part of her womanhood. Already, in spite of the unquestioned honesty of her intentions, the gift has become a little tarnished in Claudio's description. Isabella can 'play with reason' and mould the wills of men most subtly—even if quite innocently, in complete unconsciousness of artifice—to her purpose. Most significantly of all, her main power lies in the 'prone and speechless' attractions—there is even a faint suggestion of invitation and artful passivity in the adjectives—of her youthful person. It is not, of course, that she is dishonest or that she sets out to appeal deliberately to Angelo's baser instincts. It is simply that she is a woman and that therefore her power over men is one which is bound, whatever her intentions, to become a temptation. Isabella is only one of a series of young women, all conceived by Shakespeare at this time, whose behaviour is in varying degrees equivocal. Cressida betrays Troilus less through conscious infidelity than through her inability to oppose in separation the time-conditioned tendency to forget. The secluded Ophelia, too innocent for a lover who finds innocence inconceivable, expresses her insanity in bawdy songs; and even Desdemona's genuine love is expressly associated by Brabantio with the deception of her own father. The note of equivocation in all these characters does not proceed from conscious cynicism. It simply represents a strain which asserted itself at this time in Shakespeare's attitude to human love and which could only gradually be worked out in the expression. In that process of working out Isabella had an important part to play. If her virtue does not fully satisfy, that is through no clearly defined moral deficiency (though many critics have tried to find one), but simply because the state of simple virtue does not exist in *Measure for Measure*. Chastity there is surrounded by reservations not of its own making, flaws related to the flesh and inherent in the human situation. If Isabella has any fault, it is that she is unaware of these flaws and reservations. Her retire-

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ment is too simple, her virtue too little rooted in experience to correspond to the spirit in which Shakespeare conceived this play. In the very confidence with which she accepts her mission—

> Commend me to my brother: soon at night
> I'll send him certain word of my sucess (I, iv).

there is a touch of the wilfulness, itself based on inexperience, that proves fatal to Angelo. It is certain that the path to Claudio's salvation will be longer and harder than she yet realizes.

The two scenes which portray the encounter between Angelo and Isabella owe much of their effect to the fact that each is peculiarly fitted to bring out the weakness of the other. The first is devoted substantially to the downfall of Angelo. His fall is as sudden as might be expected in one whose self-knowledge has always been so limited. As Isabella warms to her task and presses him more closely the sensuality which has so long lain beneath the appearance of his self-control comes irresistibly to the surface. His utterances, at first short and ambiguous and later, after the departure of Isabella, full and passionate, become charged with the imagery of desire:

> she speaks, and 'tis
> Such sense, that my sense breeds with it.
>
> The tempter or the tempted, who sins most?
> Not she, nor does she tempt, but it is I
> That, lying by the violet in the sun,
> Do as the carrion does, not as the flower,
> Corrupt with virtuous season. Can it be
> That modesty may more betray our sense
> Than woman's lightness? Having waste ground enough,
> Shall we desire to raze the sanctuary,
> And pitch our evils there. (II, ii).

The peculiar verbal texture of these speeches is already familiar in work of this period. The play, in the first tentative aside, on the double meaning of sense'—'sense' as 'meaning' or 'understanding' and 'sense' as 'sensuality'—conveys perfectly the half-conscious process by which Angelo's self-control has been undermined; the type of ambiguity so prominent in the more analytic Sonnets is being effectively projected into a personal and dramatic situation. The opening lines of the later speech, in turn, clearly recall the 'god-kissing carrion' of *Hamlet*. Compression in the syntax is once more a sign of the emotional pressure felt, though still scarcely understood, by the speaker. Angelo does not pause to develop the comparison between 'I' and the 'carrion'; he gives them simultaneous existence in a single image which brings out, in the first dim moment of realization, the significance of his new state. His will, clarifying itself in the very process of expression, reveals itself as a destructive instinct perversely incited by the mere presence of virtue to the satisfaction of its corrupt desires. The 'carrion' element of passion, always present beneath his modesty, is breaking out in a form even

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more dangerous than the evils he had so confidently undertaken to destroy.

The connection between Angelo's 'foulness' and its opposite in Isabella is the key to all that follows. Having abandoned himself irrevocably to his instincts he proceeds at their next meeting to work upon her with consummate dialectic skill. Desire, far from undermining his intelligence, sharpens it, gives it fresh power to penetrate and destroy. He proves step by step from her own words that her pleading is not really consistent with her principles; and in so doing he shows how untested are the foundations upon which these principles rest. Isabella argues that Claudio's sin, gravely as it must be regarded by the inflexible standards of the moral law, needs to be judged, *on earth and by human judges,* with the charity that springs from a sense of human weakness. When Angelo repeats his just and apparently dispassionate sentence, she takes her stand on the contrast between the absolute claim of the law and the pitiful incapacity of its instruments: ' 'T is set so down in heaven, but not in earth'. The argument is dangerous because it can be turned logically against her. If Claudio's sin is not, at least on earth, absolute and beyond forgiveness, if frailty can indeed be an adequate reason for relaxing the severity of the law, then—

> Might there not be a charity in sin
> To save this brother's life?

Isabella, still ignorant of the sinister purpose behind all this, falls directly into the trap. She declares her readiness to take upon herself responsibility for the sin to which she is pressing Angelo:

> Please *you* to do't,
> I'll take it as a peril to my soul,
> It is no sin at all, but charity.

The exclamation, generous as it is, is fatal. Isabella's plea, taken up with evil intention, recoils against her own position. If pity is a sufficient reason for relaxing the statutes, she herself can plausibly be summoned to relax them too. The conscience of the lawgiver, if—as Isabella has still every reason to suppose—his intentions are pure, is not necessarily less inviolate than that of the virgin; indeed, if the present state of Vienna is any indication, his responsibility may be greater and the call for firmness more urgent. As Angelo, taking up her very words, at once retorts:

> Please *you* to do't at peril of *your* soul,
> Were equal poise of sin and charity.

Angelo does not go so far as to deny that the act which he is urging upon Isabella is a sin. He merely shows that the charity upon which she so passionately calls can be invoked against her; events will show how far she can maintain the rigidity of her virtue without sacrificing some of her own humanity.

Isabella, of course, when she has understood the drift of

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Angelo's proposal, refuses to consider it. She refuses in terms that reflect the impulsiveness of her character but are not a *full* answer to his argument. Magnificent as the reply is emotionally it gives Angelo his chance. When she has finished he can quietly, logically return to his point:

> Were you not then as cruel as the sentence
> That you have slander'd so?

And again, with still greater force, he stresses the contrast between her present horror and the ease with which natural feeling had brought her to demand the suspension of the law:

> You seem'd of late to make the law a tyrant;
> And rather prov'd the sliding of your brother
> A merriment than a vice.

At this point Isabella begins to realize the weakness of her position. She admits it in her reply—'To have what we would have, we speak not what we mean'. This is not the kind of answer that is likely to dissuade Angelo. 'We are all frail', he insists, and once more Isabella falls into the trap laid for her. 'Else let my brother die', she exclaims; and Angelo uses this, her appeal to charity, to press home the implications of his original argument. 'Nay, women are frail too', he insinuates, and goes on to make his logical deduction:

> Since, I suppose, we are made to be no stronger
> Than faults may shake our frames,—let me be bold—
> I do arrest your words. Be that you are,
> That is a woman; if you be more, you're none.

The argument, perverse as it is, brings out complexities which Isabella is remarkably unfitted to recognize. She originally brought forward the admission of man's natural weakness as a reason for relaxing the rigour of the law; Angelo, not less logically, though moved by the selfishness of his own desire, bases upon the very same recognition his demand that she should surrender herself to his will.

What are we to conclude from all this? Not certainly that Angelo is right and Isabella wrong. Isabella's main point—the essential distinction between 'ignominy in ransom' and the graciousness of 'free pardon'—stands, and Angelo's lust is clearly the enemy of virtue. Yet we do wrong, beyond this, to falsify Shakespeare's conception by looking for 'solutions' to clear-cut moral problems. The dilemma set before Isabella is one which the play is not concerned to solve. Shakespeare merely gives us two opposed attachments, both right and both involved in contradiction by an evil quite beyond her control. But, granted that the dilemma is beyond any perfect solution, Isabella shows no understanding of the natural root of Claudio's sin. It is hard not to feel in her virtue at least a touch of wilful egoism.

> More than our brother is our chastity,

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she says, and the words already anticipate, by the clarity with which they divide the morally indivisible, the revulsion with which she later turns on her brother when he weakens in his resolve to accept untimely death:

> Heaven shield my mother play'd my father fair,
> For such a warped slip of wilderness
> Ne'er issued from his blood. Take my defiance;
> Die, perish! might but my bending down
> Reprieve thee from thy fate, it should proceed:
> I'll pray a thousand prayers for thy death,
> No word to save thee. (III, i).

It is not the sentiment that surprises, but the emphasis of its expression. That Isabella should, in such a case, refuse indignantly is natural: that she should turn upon her brother, accuse him of cowardice and even—at the moment of condemning him to death—cast upon him the shadow of bastardy is less so. It is certainly not in harmony with that spirit of deeper understanding towards which Shakespeare is groping all through this play. The ideas of virtue and vice did not present themselves to the author of *Measure for Measure* as clear-cut and opposed issues. They were rather things that tended, however distinct they might appear in *a priori* definition, to merge into one another in the difficult business of living. The egoism which prompted Angelo to will the evil conceived in his 'appetite' is not totally absent from Isabella's defence of her chastity. 'Virtue', as each of them conceives it, is still a partial and abstract thing, still an imposition of the reason planted a little aridly upon a whole world of sentiments and reactions which remain outside it and take refuge in the humanity, corrupt and hollow though it be, of Pompey and Lucio. Both sets of characters, the good not less than the evil, are still partial, still lacking in the self-knowledge which true moral maturity requires. Both are themselves in need of judgment and both, before they can be adequately judged, must be considered in the light of an experience more mature and impartial than their own.

That experience is provided by the Duke. The figure of the Duke, as Shakespeare conceives him, hesitates between two aspects. He is both inside the action as an indispensable instrument of the plot, and outside it, judging with compassionate detachment the events to which his own abdication has given rise. The two functions are not always perfectly distinct. As a character within the action his self-confessed weakness, born though it is of a tolerance and understanding which events prove to have been very necessary, has contributed to the intolerable conditions of Viennese social life. As a detached 'symbol' of truth in judgment, whose entry into the remotest corners of the action is covered by his function as 'friar' and confessor, his understanding is absolute, perfect. Angelo himself, in the hour of his exposure, ascribes to the Duke certain attributes of divinity:

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O my dread lord,
I should be guiltier than my guiltiness,
To think I can be undiscernible,
When I perceive your grace, *like power divine*,
Hath look'd upon my passes. (V, i).

The transition between these two positions of the Duke in his relationship to events takes place during the course of the action. Mysterious and retired in the early scenes, he comes forward increasingly as the action advances. In the later episodes he holds the threads in his hands, directs them, and provides in his observations upon them the most impartial comment. No other Shakespearean character, at this stage in the poet's career, had been conceived with so clearly 'symbolic' an intention; it is even possible to think of the Duke as a first faint approximation to Prospero.

In emphasizing this superior detachment we must not think of the Duke's function in terms of providing solutions, more or less clearly defined, to difficult problems. 'Solutions' of this kind are no part of the writer's function. Shakespeare was elaborating a state of experience, not answering an abstract question; and this state was essentially a strife, a disharmony still far from poetic resolution. 'Solutions' in Shakespeare are not intellectual statements; they are only apprehensible in a gradual harmonizing of imagery to which the functions of plot and character become increasingly knitted. The contradictory elements of experience are resolved, if at all, in the process of living them out. The harmony towards which they move is not imposed in abstraction, but slowly and patiently attained through a steady incorporation of the most diverse elements. In *Measure for Measure*, at any rate it is still early to speak of this kind of resolution. The Duke, and therefore Shakespeare with him, is primarily occupied in *understanding*, in trying to bear in mind all the different and contradictory elements which a premature moral solution—such as that ruthlessly and yet, as it seems, necessarily proposed by Angelo—must fatally offend. The Duke, as Escalus remarks, is one that has 'above all other *strifes, contended* especially to know himself' (III, ii). This description is significant. Both Angelo and Isabella had failed in self-knowledge, in awareness of the complex knot of good and evil which centres on human passion. A law-giver must be aware of this complexity, must seek to harmonize the natural sources of experience with the moral 'law'. In *Measure for Measure*, however, this knowledge is still a strife rather than a harmony; the goodness of human inclination, which must be recognized to attain moral maturity, contains also a seed of evil which the moral law must uproot. The Duke's own self-knowledge, however, still hangs in the balance. It is still a 'strife', a 'contention', a matter of working out obscure and even contradictory impulses that refuse, so far, to submit to a common unity. The fact that he exists at all, that Shakespeare was able to conceive a judgment based upon complete impartiality, points to the direction in which his interests were moving; but between the conception and such fulfil-

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ment of it as was attained in the final plays of his maturity, lies the prolonged experience of the tragedies.

The Duke's distinctive contribution to *Measure for Measure* really begins when, having assumed the Friar's role, he comes to confess Claudio (III, i). He introduces, in his great opening speech, a new element, a fresh fact in relation to which the problems raised by the desires of the flesh need to be reconsidered. This fact is the universal relevance of death. Taking up once more the mood already so prominent in *Hamlet* Shakespeare makes the Duke assert, before the sentence which hangs over Claudio, the futility of *all* desire. Hamlet, in one of his many shifting attitudes, had thought of death as a 'sleep', a release from the intolerable necessity of choice in a world which afforded no sufficient reason for choosing. The Duke, following the same line of thought and expressing himself in very similar imagery, argues to Claudio that the very acceptance of death will free the soul from the burden of its desires:

> Be absolute for death; either death or life
> Shall be thereby the sweeter.

To Claudio's confession of hope—'I have hope to live, and am prepared to die'—the Duke replies with a reasoned pessimism whose acceptance of death places it beyond the uncertainty which inevitably accompanies and often flaws all human desire. In a world dominated by mutability and fluctuation man is no more than an inconsistent bundle of ephemeral impulses, and the only thing about him which is constant is his destiny of death. The mood, as I have said, is the mood of *Hamlet*, but with one essential difference: the supreme place given by *Measure for Measure* to the conscious exercise of the moral judgment. Hamlet is moved at times to crave death by an emotional impulse, just as he is impelled at others to react from it with horror. In either case he is still, morally speaking, something of an adolescent, bound up in his own mental processes and imperfectly aware of the reasons and consequences of them. The Duke's position, beneath an apparent verbal similarity, is not quite the same. He proposes to Claudio a clear-cut moral choice, based upon a reasoned weighing of the possibilities of life and demanding a conscious acceptance of tragic values. That is why *Measure for Measure* represents, in some sense, an advance upon *Hamlet*. The Prince of Denmark is less a character than an intricate bundle of contradictory impulses. His make-up is not clear precisely because it was not, at the time of writing, altogether clear to the author. Character, on the stage as in life, requires a point of focus round which the various impulses may cohere; and in the figures of Angelo, Isabella, and Claudio that point is provided by the reaction of the mature moral being to the fact of death. Death is the common destiny of man and simply to rebel against it is the act of a child; but to consider in the light of it the passions and appetites which have brought Claudio—and Vienna—to such tragic consequences is the beginning of wisdom.

The beginning, but not the end. Men do well to accept the idea

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of death as an element inextricably interwoven, through the action of time, with every moment of our living experience. Without that acceptance there is no true maturity; but without a corresponding sense of life there is no vitality at all. The reaction against death, like that against the law, affects *Measure for Measure* at every level in society. The problem of Pompey, as it faces Angelo and Escalus, is balanced for the Duke by that of Barnardine. Like Pompey, like so many other characters in the background of this play, Barnardine has no conception of the moral law. He has, in other words, no understanding of the implications of death upon which the necessity of that law so urgently depends. He is, in the words of the Provost, 'a man that apprehends death no more dreadfully than a sleep; careless, reckless and fearless of what's past, present, or to come; *insensible of mortality, and desperately mortal*' (IV, ii). The Duke whose own sense of the moral law is so closely bound up with his awareness of mortality, cannot consent to his execution in such a state. He finds Barnardine—

> A creature unprepared, unmeet for death;
> And to transport him in the mind he is
> Were damnable.

Damnable: the sense of moral issues implicit in our acts and prolonging themselves inexorably to eternity is throughout distinctive of the Duke's outlook. The acceptance of the moral law, itself based on the recognition of inevitable dissolution, leads to a deeper, profounder respect for human life. This does not, of course, invalidate the law itself, or even diminish the need for its constant enforcement; but it does underline the almost infinite patience and understanding which that enforcement involves. Barnardine, though only a minor character in *Measure for Measure,* has a distinctive part of his own to play; and Shakespeare, in allowing him to play it, enriches notably the moral pattern of his conception.

The reservations represented by Barnardine are taken up on a higher level—as they were with Pompey in the matter of judgment—by Claudio and Isabella. As the dialogue between these two proceeds after the Duke's departure, the emphasis is slowly but decisively shifted from death to its opposite—that is, to Claudio's keen desire for life. Even in the Duke's first speech, where the feeling for death is most intense, we feel the horror of the

> soft and tender fork
> Of a poor worm.

This horror can be paralleled in *Hamlet*. So much can hardly be said of the way in which Isabella's attempt to minimize the pangs of death turns into an acute realization of the actual nervous 'pang' of dying:

> Darest thou die?
> The sense of death is most in apprehension;
> And the poor beetle that we tread upon,
> In corporal sufferance finds a pang as great
> As when a giant dies. (III, i).

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Clearly, this is no sort of argument for death. The underlying sensibility of the speech obviously contradicts the conscious argument. The emphasis is no longer where the Duke had left it, upon the peace of death, but rather upon the pain involved in the passage to extinction. The body reacts with vivid sensual immediacy against the consolation offered to it. The reaction, proceeding as it does from the nervous sensibility, is completely spontaneous; and gradually it communicates itself to Claudio. At first he is resolved to die that his sister's honour may be saved; but the resolution that expresses itself in the phrase—'I will encounter darkness as a bride', is really a rhetorical effort to force himself to accept a fate which he still regards as inevitable. It does not live long. As Claudio slowly comes to realize that he *might* live, his resolution palpably wavers. The first resolve had been clear-cut, decisive—'Thou shalt not do it'. But when his sister, with that strange moral ruthlessness which is part of her character, and—as we now know—of her weakness, forces him to face his position with the unambiguous order—'Be ready, Claudio, for your death to-morrow', he hesitates. 'Yes', he answers, but slowly and with deliberation, as though his thoughts were fixed elsewhere; and indeed they pass, in the phrase that immediately follows, to considerations that affect him more nearly—

> Sure, it is no sin;
> Or of the deadly seven it is the least.

The phrase already amounts to a plea to Isabella to change her mind. To meet death boldly when no hope of life remains is a thing that a man owes to his self-respect, but to choose it when it might be avoided, even shamefully, is far harder. It calls for a degree of detachment and determination which few young men can claim to possess. Claudio tries to show that he has acquired them, but fails.

In the remark I have just quoted, if anywhere, lies the moral issue beneath the whole incident. The conception of *Measure for Measure* rests upon a balance between two aspects of human passion: the natural and proper instinct upon which it rests, and the dissolution and disease to which its unchecked indulgence leads. Shakespeare's phrase holds the balance perfectly. Let us make no mistake about it. The idea that it would be 'no sin' for Isabella to lie with Angelo is no part of Shakespeare's conception. It *is* a sin, and a *deadly* one, barely redeemable. Claudio himself has committed this same 'deadly sin'—and the phrase has behind it the force of a Christian tradition to which Shakespeare in this play firmly adheres—but he has also committed the most natural, the most spontaneous of the seven. Isabella, when she turns on him in her anger, forgets this. It is not her decision which is wrong, but her expression of it which is—from the Duke's level of compassionate understanding—inadequate; and Claudio's profoundly human observation compels us to recognize it. Having made it he falters and then visibly breaks down. His horror at the wickedness of Angelo passes into the background, interrupted by the exclamation which

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the full recognition of his plight wrings from him—'O Isabel! Death is a fearful thing!' And now, face to face with the unadorned fact, all the keen sense of life which had been implied in Isabella's argument for death takes possession of his own utterance. The instincts, refusing to accept the extinction decreed for them, react against the abstract resolve previously imposed on them:

> Ay, but to die, and go we know not where . . .
>
> The weariest and most loathed worldly life
> That age, ache, penury and imprisonment
> Can lay on nature, is a paradise
> To what we fear of death. (III, i).

This is the fear of Hamlet once again, the dread of uncertainty following extinction; but it is that fear expressed with a physical immediacy unknown to the earlier play. The emphasis in Claudio's tremendous outburst of horror is all upon the sensitive apprehension of life, upon the immediate opposition between the 'sensible warm motion' of the living body and the 'cold', rotted 'obstruction' which reduces it to 'a kneaded clod'; even the life of the 'delighted spirit' in the cosmic obscurity of the after-life is sensually conceived. The impending presence of death has brought out in Claudio a fear whose very weakness is natural, human: a fear which Isabella's virtue has not allowed for, but which the Duke in his compassion will understand and accept.

It is from this point, indeed, that his activities of reconciliation really begin to take shape. His 'symbolic' function henceforward overshadows his internal position in the action. Having overheard the dialogue of Isabella and Claudio he realizes the wickedness of Angelo and begins at once to take steps to ward off its practical consequences. These steps are plunged for a time, corresponding roughly to the duration of the fourth Act, in an obscurity during which the issues are delicately balanced, poised between life and death. The Duke's behaviour, often at this stage as tortuous and enigmatic as the realities with which he is contending, does a good deal to justify Lucio's description of him as 'the old fantastical duke of dark corners' (IV, iii). But this obscurity in the Duke is only a reflection of the situation, moral and spiritual, with which he is struggling. Like the strife of self-knowledge to which he is dedicated, the bringing of order and clarity out of confusion is a long and arduous process. He works, it is worth noting, at night. This part of the play, in which the mysterious intrigues of the Duke and Angelo strive for supremacy, is full of references to 'the heavy middle of the night' (IV, i), to 'dead midnight' (IV, ii), and—perhaps most significant of all with the sense of deception and disappointment—to 'eyes that do mislead the morn' (IV, ii). The issue, in short, still hangs in the balance, and evil instead of good may easily come from it. The intricate mechanism of the plot at this point, which is often brought forward as evidence of Shakespeare's lack of interest in his theme, may be more significant than it looks. The Duke, for

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all his detachment, is not fully in charge of events. He is learning, like the others, from experience, and only differs from them in the wider range of his compassion. The control of evil is *not* in his hands; its machinations often find him unprepared, leave him groping hastily in the darkness for an improvised remedy. That is why the unfolding of this play, directed towards a clarification which has no place in the outlook of the characters themselves, cannot completely satisfy. The external and the inner situation, the visible action and the spiritual impulse, simply do not correspond. When Angelo, by a crowning perfidy, sends word that Claudio's execution is to be put forward so as to take place before the 'meeting' in which Isabella is to buy his life, the Duke is almost forestalled. Only by a rather unconvincing trick of substitution does he avert tragedy. In the confusion which life offers to the seeker after moral clarity the opportunity to do good offers itself in a strangely haphazard way; and the Duke, with no more than an unusually awakened moral sense to see him through the surrounding darkness, grasps it and turns it to his own ends. In so doing, however, he increases the area of his understanding and shows his humanity.

Measure for Measure, then, offers no real 'solution' to the problems it raises. The problems, indeed, still interested Shakespeare more closely than the possible 'solutions'. The ambiguities so essential to the play were to be worked out, with far greater resources and in another style, later. Here the resolution is no more than hinted at. The clearing-up in the last scene is little more than a piece of able manipulation. The full body of experience never really informs it, as it had informed the episodes of anguish and division, to give it a corresponding life. But suggestions of greater clarity can be found. They express themselves, in that very Fourth Act which seems so given over to tortuous obscurities, in a rising series of dawn-images, which become more powerful as the Duke begins to feel his mastery of the situation. It culminates in his great prose speech to the Provost:

> 'Look, the unfolding star calls up the shepherd. Put not yourself into amazement how these things should be: *all difficulties are but easy when they are known* . . . Yet you are amazed; but this shall absolutely resolve you. Come away; it is almost clear dawn'. (IV, ii).

But the 'symbolism', if such we may call it, remains elementary. All the forces of life and fertility suggested in Lucio's great speech on Claudio's love are not yet behind it to give it life and adequate content. This strengthening has yet to grow out of the whole body of the tragedies. The theme of *Measure for Measure* is still the inextricable interdependence of good and evil within human experience as centred in the act of passion. The mature tragedies which follow are to separate the elements within this complexity; this separation will result in a more adequate projection of the individual experience into a more plastic and sensitive dramatic form.

D. A. TRAVERSI.

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COMMENTS AND REVIEWS

APOLOGY FOR A LATE APPEARANCE.

For the lateness of this number of *Scrutiny*, which should have appeared in July, the Editors must apologize, though they do not admit any guilt. First, there was the difficulty over paper: it seemed to them wise not to commit themselves to any given size or lay-out until they should be less uncertain as to the amount of paper that could be counted on during the coming year. Then, just as they had decided that a 'Summer' issue must appear without further delay, enemy-action intervened. The building adjoining the printing-works was demolished (it was the raid in which, as has been reported in the press, bombs fell near the Round Church, which, however, escaped serious damage), with the result that dirt, *débris* and water held up printing for some time.

The preparation of the next number is well advanced. The date of its publication cannot yet be given, since there are reasons for not yet fixing definitely the periodicity it is proposed to observe. But the number will appear reasonably soon. The position by then should be clearer. It may be added that a notable increase of support during the past year has confirmed the Editors in their determination to carry on.

CORRECTIONS.

In the January number W. H. Mellers, by a slip (he had originally intended to review also the String Quintet in the same key), referred to Dvorak's Piano Quartet in E flat as a Quintet. Readers have pointed out the mistake.

In the review of Bloch in the April number the last clause on p. 404 should read: 'and they will make it clear that he is a big composer, less noble and heroic than the Bax of the large-scale works *only by virtue of being more urgently contemporary*'. The omission of the last phrase more or less reverses the meaning.

J. C. Maxwell on p. 393, line 20, is represented as having written: 'commonplace *or* orthodox Christianity'. He wrote: 'commonplace *of* orthodox Christianity'.

On p. 344, line 21, 'Prospero's *imagery*' appears for 'Prospero's *magic*'.

DISPERSED COLLABORATORS.

Many editorial difficulties are caused by the absence abroad of contributors, or by their being sent abroad after having undertaken a review or an article.

Ronald Bottrall, whose new sequence appears in this number, is the Representative of the British Council at Stockholm.

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ELIOT'S LATER POETRY

THE DRY SALVAGES, by T. S. Eliot (Faber and Faber, 1/-).

The Dry Salvages ('pronounced to rhyme with *assuages*') is the third member to appear of a sequence that began with *Burnt Norton*, continued with *East Coker*, and, one gathers, is to be completed in a fourth poem. Each member is a poem in itself, as the separate publication intimates, but it is plain now, with three of the four to hand, that the sequence is to be a real whole; a total context which each constituent poem needs for its full significance. Now too, with this new poem before him, the literary critic finds himself once more turning over the principle that poetry is to be judged as poetry—turning it over and wondering what it is worth and how far it will take him. May there perhaps be a point at which literary criticism, if (as he must believe) there is, or ought to be, such a thing, finds itself confronting the challenge to leave itself behind and become another thing? Is, in any case, the field of literary criticism so delimitable as to exempt him from the theological equipment he can lay no claim to?

In overcoming this last uneasiness he will have found encouragement in the performances of commentators who have not needed to share it: it will have been so clear that their advantage has not been altogether an advantage, but has tended to disqualify them for appreciating the nature of the poet's genius. They are apt to show too great an alacrity in response; to defeat his essential method by jumping in too easily and too happily with familiar terms and concepts. This is the method that is carried to an experimental (and hardly successful) extreme in *Family Reunion*, where, if I understand rightly, Mr. Eliot aims at bringing his public, assumed for the purpose to be pagan, face to face with the Christian position or view of life without invoking Christian dogma, or such familiar concepts and symbols as would fall comfortably in with the lethargy of custom. In the poetry, of course, there is no pretence that the sensibility is not Christian; but it is not for nothing that D. W. Harding[1] described *Burnt Norton*, which doesn't stand apart from the body of Eliot's religious verse, as being concerned with the 'creation of concepts'. The poet's magnificent intelligence is devoted to keeping as close as possible to the concrete of sensation, emotion and perception. Though this poetry is plainly metaphysical in preoccupation, it is as much poetry, it belongs as purely to the realm of sensibility, and has in it as little of the abstract and general of discursive prose, as any poetry that was ever written. Familiar terms and concepts are inevitably in sight, but what is distinctive about the poet's method is the subtle and resourceful discipline of continence with which, in its exploration of experience, it approaches them.

[1]See his extraordinarily interesting and penetrating review of *Collected Poems 1908-1935* in *Scrutiny* for September, 1936. It seems to me pre-eminently the note on Eliot to send people to.

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Of course, the sensibility being Christian, they lie behind the poetry, as well as being in front of it (so to speak) as something to be recreated; but they are never taken up as accepted instruments for getting to work with. We might apply here some adaptation of the poet's critical dictum: '[Tradition] cannot be inherited, and if you want it you must obtain it by great labour'. Well-equipped commentators would do well, for a simple illustration of the kind of danger and temptation awaiting them, to consider how Eliot uses Dante in *Ash-Wednesday,* and how easy it would be with the aid of a Dante primer, to work out an illuminating commentary that would save grateful readers the trouble of understanding the poem.

The poetry from *Ash-Wednesday* onwards doesn't say, 'I believe', or 'I know', or 'Here is the truth'; it is positive in direction but not positive in that way (the difference from Dante is extreme). It is a searching of experience, a spiritual discipline, a technique for sincerity—for giving 'sincerity' a meaning. The preoccupation is with establishing from among the illusions, evanescences and unrealities of life in time an apprehension of an assured reality—a reality that, though necessarily apprehended in time, is not of it. There is a sustained positive effort—the constructive effort to be 'conscious':

> Time past and time future
> Allow but a little consciousness.
> To be conscious is not to be in time
> But only in time can the moment in the rose-garden,
> The moment in the arbour where the rain beat,
> The moment in the draughty church at smokefall
> Be remembered; involved with past and future.
> Only through time time is conquered.
>
> *Burnt Norton.*

With these 'moments' is associated 'the sudden illumination':

> The moments of happiness—not the sense of well-being,
> Fruition, fulfilment, security or affection,
> Or even a very good dinner, but the sudden illumination—
> We had the experience, but missed the meaning,
> And approach to the meaning restores the experience
> In a different form, beyond any meaning
> We can assign to happiness.
>
> *The Dry Salvages.*

'Illumination', it will be seen, is no simple matter, and *Ash-Wednesday,* where the religious bent has so pronounced a liturgical expression, is remarkable for the insistent and subtle scrupulousness of the concern manifested to guard against the possibilities of temptation, self-deception and confusion that attend on the aim and the method.

Perhaps the way in which the sense of an apprehended higher reality, not subject to the laws of time and mundane things, is conveyed is most simply illustrated in *Marina,* that lovely poem (a

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limiting description) with the epigraph from Seneca. There, in the opening, the enchanted sense of a landfall in a newly discovered world blends with the suggestions (to be taken up later on in the poem) of 'daughter'—the 'daughter' being associated by the title of the poem with the Shakespearean heroine who, lost at sea, was miraculously found again, for the father an unhoped-for victory over death:

> What seas what shores what grey rocks and what islands
> What water lapping the bow
> And scent of pine and the woodthrush singing through the fog
> What images return
> O my daughter

The images that follow in the next paragraph bring in the insistently recurring ' Death' after each line, and they are evoked in order that we may find that they now

> Are become unsubstantial, reduced by a wind,
> A breath of pine, and the woodsong fog
> By this grace dissolved in place

It may be remarked that the mundane actuality, the world of inescapable death, is elsewhere in the poems of the phase less easily dismissed; its reduction to unreality is a different affair, having nothing of enchantment about it, and the unreality is not absence. And perhaps it should be noted too as an associated point that 'grace', in its equivocal way, is the one explicitly religious touch in *Marina*.

The evocation of the apprehended reality is now taken up, and is characteristic in method:

> What is this face, less clear and clearer
> The pulse in the arm, less strong and stronger—
> Given or lent? more distant than stars and nearer than the eye
>
> Whispers and small laughter between leaves and hurrying feet
> Under sleep, where all the waters meet.

The face, 'less clear and clearer', doesn't belong to the ordinary experience of life in time, and the effect of a higher reality is reinforced by the associations of the last two lines—associations that, with their potent suggestion, characteristic of some memories of childhood, of a supremely illuminating significance, recur so much in Eliot's later work—

> We had the experience, but missed the meaning
> And approach to the meaning restores the significance
> In a different form, beyond any meaning
> We can assign to happiness.

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The effect depends upon a kind of co-operative co-presence of the different elements of suggestion, the co-operation being, as the spare and non-logical pointing intimates, essentially implicit, and not a matter for explicit development. What in fact we have is nothing of the order of affirmation or statement, but a kind of tentatively defining exploration.

The rest of the poem adds to the co-present elements the suggestion of a constructive effort, which, though what it constructs is defective and insecure, has a necessary part in the discovery or apprehension:

> I made this . . .
> . . . . . .
> Made this unknowing, halfconscious, unknown, my own,
> The garboard strake leaks, the seams need caulking.
> This form, this face, this life
> Living to live in a world of time beyond me; let me
> Resign my life for this life, my speech for that unspoken,
> The awakened, lips parted, the new ships.

Thus, in the gliding from one image, evocation or suggestion to another, so that all contribute to a total effect, there is created a sense of a supreme significance, elusive, but not, like the message of death, illusory; an opening into a new and more than personal life.

In the *Coriolan* poems it is the unreal actuality that fills the foreground of attention. They deal with the world of public affairs and politics, and it seems natural to call them satires; they are certainly great poetry, and they come as near to great satiric poetry as this age is likely to see. Again we have a search for the real among temporal unrealities. *Triumphal March* gives us the great occasion, the public event, the supremely significant moment. The reduction and deflation of the 'significance' is effected by sudden uncommented slides of the focus, or shiftings of the plane. In the opening we share the exaltation and expectancy of the holiday crowd:

> Stone, bronze, stone, steel, stone, oakleaves, horses' heels
> Over the paving.
> And the flags. And the trumpets. And so many eagles.
> How many? Count them. And such a press of people.
> We hardly knew ourselves that day, or knew the City.
> This is the way to the temple, and we so many crowding
> the way.
> So many waiting, how many waiting? what did it matter,
> on such a day?
> Are they coming? No, not yet. You can see some eagles.
> And hear the trumpets.
> Here they come. Is he coming?
> The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving.
> We can wait with our stools and our sausages.

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In the last two lines we have two shifts; first to the level of philosophical observation,

> The natural wakeful life of our Ego is a perceiving

(which has its quasi-musical response towards the end of the poem in

> That is all we could see, etc.),

and then to the mob's natural level of banality (a theme developed in the final paragraph just referred to). Then again we have the tense expectancy; at last the real thing is about to appear:

> What comes first? Can you see? Tell us. It is
>
> 5,800,000 rifles and carbines,
> 102,000 machine guns,
> 28,000 trench mortars *etc.*

And it is at any rate one kind of basic 'reality' that, with ironical effect, the prolonged inhuman inventory gives us. That is what 'comes first', contrasting significantly with the Lord Mayor's Show passage that takes it up at the level of 'human interest'. Following the Mayor and the Liverymen comes—supreme public moment, climax of the day—the Hero, the Führer, presented in a guise of equivocally godlike self-sufficiency:

> There is no interrogation in his eyes
> Or in the hands, quiet over the horse's neck,
> And the eyes watchful, waiting, perceiving, indifferent.

Comment follows immediately in the sudden shift to the imagery of 'consciousness'; imagery that evokes the eternal reality and the escape from time and the flux, and, recurrent as it is in the later poems, indicates the place among them of these satires as something like movements of one work:

> O hidden under the dove's wing, hidden under the turtle's breast,
> Under the palmtree at noon, under the running water
> At the still point of the turning world. O hidden.

Difficulties of a Statesman works in the same way as *Triumphal March*. Dealing with the unrealities of politics and public affairs, the conventional importances, the loss of ends in the bustle of getting things done, the usurping and frustrating complication of the machinery—

> The first thing to do is to form the committees:
> The consultative councils, the standing committees, select committees and sub-committees.
> One secretary will do for several committees

—it places all this by the same kind of abrupt passing invocation of the eternal and ultimate, source of significance and peace. It

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ends with the consummate ironic duplicity of

RESIGN RESIGN RESIGN.

Burnt Norton, the first poem of the sequence to which *The Dry Salvage* belongs, has the effect of being in a special sense a 'new start'[1]. It is as if the poet were conducting a radical inquiry into the nature and methods of his exploration. The poem is as purely and essentially a poem as anything else of Mr. Eliot's; but it seems to me to be the equivalent in poetry of a philosophical work—to do by strictly poetical means the business of an epistemological and metaphysical inquiry. Of course, in this given case examination of the instruments is necessarily at the same time a use of them in the poet's characteristic kind of exploration. Yet to convey the distinctive character of this poem the stress must fall as I have suggested. Harding, in the illuminating commentary referred to above, registers this character in his own way when he speaks of the poem as being concerned with the 'creation of concepts'.

The kind of expository generality that distinguishes *Burnt Norton* is well illustrated by the opening:

> Time present and time past
> Are both perhaps present in time future,
> And time future contained in time past.
> If all time is eternally present
> All time is unredeemable.
> What might have been is an abstraction
> Remaining a perpetual possibility
> Only in a world of speculation.
> What might have been and what has been
> Point to one end, which is always present.
> Footfalls echo in the memory
> Down the passage which we did not take
> Towards the door we never opened
> Into the rose-garden. My words echo
> Thus, in your mind.

The general propositions of the first ten lines have, by the time we have read the rest of the passage, become clearly part of a *procédé* and a total effect that belong to poetry, and not to the order of abstraction of discursive prose. The particular memory evoked is not an illustration of the general propositions; these, rather, represent a pondering, with results in generalized significance, of the memory, the 'illuminative' quality of which, along with the unseizableness—

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[1]So here I am, in the middle way, having had twenty years—
Twenty years largely wasted, the years of *l'entre deux guerres*—
Trying to learn to use words, and every attempt
Is a wholly new start . . .
East Coker.

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the sudden illumination—
We had the experience, but missed the meaning,
And approach to the meaning restores the experience
In a different form

—is marvellously conveyed. The unseizableness—the specific indeterminate status of the experience and the elusiveness of the meaning—we can see being defined, or created, in the paradoxical

Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden.

'Footfalls echo' is a fact, and 'memory' becomes the 'passage' which, though we did not take it, is thus itself a present fact.

The complex effect of a de-realizing of the routine commonsense world together with the evoking of a reality that lies hidden among the unrealities into which life in time, closely questioned, paradoxes itself is clinched by the sudden shift:

My words echo
Thus, in your mind

The 'not' and 'never' of the preceding sentence are 'thus' (finely placed word) in a way countered. To convey the status of what is apprehended, what stands, in this searching of experience takes both 'is' and 'is not'. The effect is completed by the disjoined next sentence—

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know

—which, in its sudden drop to another plane, to a distancing comment, brings out by contrast the immediacy of what goes before, while at the same time contributing directly to the sensuous presentness of the whole—the words that echo 'thus' disturb, in front of us, 'the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves' ('dust' and 'rose-leaves' together evoke one of those co-presences of opposing associations which seem to replace words by immediate sensation, and the whole sentence, of course, relates back with various subtleties of significance to the 'rose-garden' and 'time' of the opening paragraph).

The re-creation of, or by, 'echoes'—

other echoes
Inhabit the garden

(and they are echoes that recur in *Family Reunion* as well as the poems), the restoring 'approach to the meaning', continues in a sustained way in the remainder of the section, concluding with, for my 'unseizable',

Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.

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Regarding this reality we read in the next section:

> Yet the enchainment of past and future
> Woven in the weakness of the changing body,
> Protects mankind from heaven and damnation
> Which flesh cannot endure.

—The reality is sought because, by providing an absolute reference, it is to confront the spirit with the necessity of supreme decisions, ultimate choices, and so give a meaning to life; something not to be found in this 'place of disaffection' (which, plainly in this poetry, the spirit cannot endure) where

> Only a flicker
> Over the strained time-ridden faces
> Distracted from distraction by distraction
> Filled with fancies and empty of meaning
> Tumid apathy with no concentration
> Men and bits of paper, whirled by the cold wind
> That blows before and after time,
> Wind in and out of unwholesome lungs
> Time before and time after.
> Eructation of unhealthy souls
> Into the faded air, the torpid
> Driven on the wind that sweeps the gloomy hills of London,
> Hampstead and Clerkenwell, Campden and Putney,
> Highgate, Primrose and Ludgate. Not here
> Not here the darkness, in this twittering world.

Burnt Norton develops the specifically religious note no further than the passages quoted above suggest. What is characteristic of the poem is the sustained and marvellously resourceful preoccupation that Harding examines; the preoccupation with re-creating the concept of 'eternity'.

East Coker is at the other extreme from *Burnt Norton*: it is personal, running even to autobiography (it is the most directly personal poem of Eliot's we have), and historical. We find ourselves (rightly or wrongly) relating its prevailing mood to Munich and the valedictory editorial of *The Criterion*. With a passing resurgence of the 'echoes', those reminders of the possibility of 'consciousness'—

> Whisper of running streams, and winter lightning,
> The wild thyme unseen and the wild strawberry,
> The laughter in the garden, echoed ecstasy
> Not lost, but requiring, pointing to the agony
> Of death and birth,

it is written from 'the waste sad time' of the concluding two lines of *Burnt Norton:*

> Ridiculous the waste sad time
> Stretching before and after

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It is a discipline of meditation the note of which is

> I said to my soul, be still, and wait without hope
> For hope would be hope for the wrong thing; there is yet faith
> But the faith and the love and the hope are all in the waiting.

One section (IV) is a formal and traditional religious poem. The opening section, developing a note of family history, evokes historical time and change and the decay of the old organic culture. The last, starting with a passage of direct autobiography, develops the accompanying reflections and concludes with an inversion, *In my end is my beginning*, of the opening phrase of the whole poem.

The Dry Salvages hasn't the personal and historical qualities of *East Coker*; nor has it the abstract generality (for, in spite of the easy way in which we commonly oppose it to 'concrete', 'abstract' seems the right word) of *Burnt Norton*. In its prevailing mode it lies between the other two poems. It is concerned mainly, not with the 'creation of concepts', but with dissolving the habit-created 'reality' of routine experience and commonsense, with their protective (and constructive) anæsthesias. The genius of the poet[1] strikes us afresh in the opening section as, subtly and inevitably, the symbolic significances of the 'river'—

> reminder
> Of what men choose to forget,

and of the sea—

> The river is within us, the sea is all about us,

emerge and are developed. The mind is made to feel how precariously it resists a lapsing away into the flux of the unknown and alien within; our environment of familiarities and certainties dis-

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[1]The extraordinary vitality of language in which the specifically poetic genius is so apparent gets, of course, nothing like representative attention in this review. It is apparent everywhere in the marvellous mastery of rhythm. For a random instance of the metaphorical life take, in the following passage, the characteristic 'shuttered'—a good instance of a metaphor that depends obviously on an element of *unlikeness*, of contrasting suggestion (some of the associations of 'shuttered room'), for its evocative strength:

> Now the light falls
> Across the open field, leaving the deep lane
> Shuttered with branches, dark in the afternoon . . .
> *East Coker*.

Another characteristic manifestation of the genius is this, from the same poem:

> Dawn points, and another day
> Prepares for heat and silence.

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solves into a daunting indeterminateness of shifting perspectives and recessions. Human experience seems meaningless and vain in its relativity. Our sense and notion of time are unsettled into convicted arbitrariness and vanity by the evocation of times other than human and historical:

> . . . time not our time, rung by the unhurried
> Ground swell, a time
> Older than the time of chronometers, older
> Than time counted by anxious worried women
> Lying awake, calculating the future . . .

The subtlety of resource with which the sapping and unsettling are effected is complementary to the constructive subtlety analysed by Harding in *Burnt Norton*.

The day-to-day actuality of life in time, when we are restored to it in the second section, the inertia of human continuance, presents itself in its most desolating aspect as 'Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow'—

> There is no end, but addition: the trailing
> Consequence of further days and hours . . .

It is this against this background that we have the reminder of the 'moments of happiness . . . the sudden illumination' that promise a release from the no-meaning of time:

> I have said before
> That the past experience revived in the meaning
> Is not the experience of one life only
> But of many generations . . .

There follow, in the close of the section, new subtleties in the symbolic use of the 'river' and the 'sea'. The third section develops the paradoxes of time and change, and the fourth is a formally

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The 'points' clearly comes from the French (*poindre* and *point du jour*). It is a *trouvaille* because of the suggestion, so felicitous in the context, of the regularly punctuating recurrences of time. Another, and equally characteristic kind of effect is the creative play on 'still' in these passages from *Burnt Norton*:

> After the kingfisher's wing
> Has answered light to light, and is silent, the light is still
> At the still point of the turning world.

> Only by the form, the pattern,
> Can words or music reach
> The stillness, as a Chinese jar still
> Moves perpetually in its stillness.
> Not the stillness of the violin, while the note lasts,
> Not that only . . .

Here the consummate management of stress and verse-movement is illustrated too.

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Christian invocation. It is in the last section that there comes the culminating move to which the varied process of constructive exploration, with its accompaniments of negation and rejection, its indirections and strategic envelopments, has been leading up. The passage has behind it—is meant to be read with a full sense of its having behind it—what has gone before in the complex whole that begins with *Burnt Norton* (to take that as the relevant 'new start'). It is introduced immediately by a final preparatory negative, an admirably and characteristically dry dismissal of the usual traffic in the 'supernormal':

> To explore the womb, or tomb, or dreams, all these are usual
> Pastimes and drugs, and features of the press:
> And always will be, some of them especially
> When there is distress of nations and perplexity
> Whether on the shores of Asia, or in the Edgware Road.
> Men's curiosity searches past and future
> And clings to that dimension. But to apprehend
> The point of intersection of the timeless
> With time, is an occupation for the saint—
> No occupation either, but something given
> And taken, in a lifetime's death in love,
> Ardour and selflessness and self-surrender.
> For most of us, there is only the unattended
> Moment, the moment in and out of time,
> The distraction fit, lost in a shaft of sunlight,
> The wild thyme unseen, or the winter lightning,
> Or the waterfall, or music heard so deeply
> That it is not heard at all, but you are the music
> While the music lasts. These are only hints and guesses,
> Hints followed by guesses; and the rest
> Is prayer, observance, discipline, thought and action.
> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual . . .

For the reader who comes charged with doctrine and acceptance the term 'Incarnation' thus introduced will tend to have a greater potency than for another. But in that, as I have suggested at the beginning of this review, he will not, for the appreciation of the poetry and of the genius of the poet, be altogether at an advantage. This poetry, in its 're-creation of concepts', is at the same time, and inseparably, preoccupied with the nature of acceptance and belief: one might, in fact, say, adapting Harding, that to take the place of the words 'acceptance' and 'belief' is its essential aim.

> The hint half guessed, the gift half understood, is Incarnation.
> Here the impossible union
> Of spheres of existence is actual

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—these are, no doubt, statements, to be taken as such; but though they imply a theological context, their actual context is the poem. It would be absurd to contend that the passage is not an invitation to a relating of two contexts, but nothing is gained from the point of view of either poetry or religion by an abandonment of one context for the other, or by any approach that refuses or ignores or relaxes the peculiar discipline that the poetry is. And the critic can hardly insist too much that this affirmation which seems to strain forward out of the poem must, by the reader of the poem, be referred back to what has gone before. And he who doesn't read the poem ignores the poet's genius even while applauding. There is no reason why he shouldn't applaud too Miss Sayers's demonstrations of what the creative mind, on its mettle, can do for orthodoxy.

That the poetry seems to invite a given intellectual and doctrinal frame may be found to recommend it. But the frame is another thing (and the prose is not the poetry—Eliot himself has made some relevant observations). The genius, that of a great poet, manifests itself in a profound and acute apprehension of the difficulties of his age. Those difficulties are such that they certainly cannot be met by any simple re-imposition of traditional frames. Eliot is known as professing Anglo-Catholicism and classicism; but his poetry is remarkable for the extraordinary resource, penetration and stamina with which it makes its explorations into the concrete actualities of experience below the conceptual currency; into the life that must be the *raison d'être* of any frame—while there is life at all. With all its positive aspiration and movement, it is at the same time essentially a work of radical analysis and revision, endlessly insistent in its care not to confuse the frame with the living reality, and heroic in its refusal to accept. In any case, to feel an immense indebtedness to Eliot, and to recognize the immense indebtedness of the age, one doesn't need to share his intellectually formulated conclusions, his doctrinal views, or even to be uncritical of the attitudes of his poetry.

To have gone seriously into the poetry is to have had a quickening insight into the nature of thought and language; a discipline of intelligence and sensibility calculated to promote, if any could, real vitality and precision of thought; an education intellectual, emotional and moral. From such a study it would be impossible to come away with a crudely simplifying attitude towards the problems facing the modern world, or without an enhanced consciousness of the need both for continuity and for 'new starts'. As remarked above, Eliot's work is peculiarly relevant to the stresses of our time; and this remains true, in spite of the change of fashions that set in at the beginning of the last decade. His relative distinction and his title to respect and gratitude are certainly not less than they were a dozen years ago. To him, in fact, might be adapted the tribute that he once paid to that very different genius, D. H. Lawrence; he pre-eminently has stood for the spirit in these brutal and discouraging years. And it should by now be impossible to doubt that he is among the greatest poets of the English language.

F. R. LEAVIS.

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AN AMERICAN CRITIC

THE WOUND AND THE BOW, by Edmund Wilson (Secker and Warburg, 15/-).

This is a book to recommend—to say which is to accord it considerable distinction, for of very little of the literary criticism that comes out can one say as much. It should be placed, along with *Axel's Castle,* in the ideal select library for students of English in universities, as well as on the bookshelf designed to promote an intelligent interest in literature in sixth forms. The longest essay in the collection, that on Dickens, should be recommended to be read with Gissing's little book, Santayana's essay in *Soliloquies in England,* and R. C. Churchill's essay in the April number of *Scrutniy*. That on Kipling should be compared with Boris Ford's in this present number. It will be seen that Wilson places a higher value than Ford does upon Kipling's art, and I must confess that Ford's estimate seems to me plainly the sounder.

I have, then, already qualified my recommendation. I shouldn't in fact, send anyone to Edmund Wilson either for sureness of evaluative judgment, or for examples of critical method—of literary criticism as a specific discipline of intelligence and sensibility, aiming at the closest and most delicate relevance. Wilson's approach is typical of contemporary critical writing in that he is preoccupied with explaining his authors' literary development in terms of their private psychological tensions considered genetically and of the social tensions of their age. But his is an educated mind, informed with good sense and a genuine interest in literature and civilization, and he has none of the crudities of the usual amateur psycho-analyst or the usual Marxizing explainer. His account of the way in which Dickens's varying responsiveness to the Victorian social structure and its shifts is related to the circumstances of his early family history in general, and the episode of the blacking factory in particular, is intelligent and illuminating. One may feel that, for a reminder that the novelist's art is an art of using words—a truth that a critic should never lose sight of, it is salutary to pass on from Wilson's essay to R. C. Churchill's; but for Wilson's there is no need to feel anything but grateful. The essay on Kipling, however, explaining in terms of Kipling's childhood *traumata* his changing attitudes toward authority, prescription and the British governing classes, does seem to illustrate how, in such an approach, the truth in question will tend to get less than its due. As intelligent a critic as Wilson could hardly have been so indulgent in value-judgment if he had not, in regarding his texts primarily as documents for diagnosis, tended to lose touch with the standards relevant to works of literature. So too in his essay on Hemingway, whom he relates interestingly to prevalent moods and mentalities, he implies an estimate of Hemingway's talent and achievement that an operative critical sensibility—one trained and mature—would hardly endorse. It is also characteristic that his essay on *Finnegan's Wake* should be, in its preoccupation

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with explaining, uncertain in judging.

Still, there is nothing crude about this book. The title essay is on the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles. It is perhaps the least interesting of the lot; but it does serve to enforce the point that Wilson's criticism has a background of wide general cultivation. And a further point to be noted is that most of these essays appeared first in *The New Republic*. What could one find in an English journal that would bear reprinting as well—or at all?

F. R. LEAVIS.

GRAMOPHONE RECORDS

BYRD: MASS FOR FIVE VOICES (sung by the Fleet Street Choir, Decca,).

Until the issue of these records the greatest of English composers was, scandalous though it may seem, unrepresented in the catalogues of the English recording companies save for one or two unimportant pieces imperfectly recorded in the Columbia History of Music. Now Decca, to celebrate Byrd's quatrocentenary, have given us the five-part Mass, well recorded and superbly sung by the Fleet Street Choir (though some may find the use of female sopranos anachronistic), and of all the debts of gratitude one owes to Decca for 'services to music' since the outbreak of war, this is by far the biggest. The five-part Mass, if it is not Byrd at his most idiosyncratic (as in his settings of English words) is in the purity and virtuosity of its vocal melodic technique perhaps still more representative of Byrd's position as a European figure at a time when England led the musical world: it is one of his two greatest works and one of the most sublime creations in the history of European music. Ability to respond to the ardent intensity which this music achieves through the very purity and apparent impersonality of its means is for the layman perhaps the most authentic test of true musicality, while for the student and contemporary composer it is an invaluably 'central' expression of the processes of creative musical thought. I hope to discuss these records in some detail in a future article on vocal and polyphonic technique in the sixteenth century: for the present I need only point out that, as William Glock remarked in an admirable review in *The Observer*, one can buy these three records for something less than the cost of five visits to the Albert Hall, and that they are worth fifty. Let us hope that support will be such that Decca and the Fleet Street Choir will be encouraged to give us, without delay, versions of the Great Service and of some of the noblest anthems. If these records pass unnoticed by English musicians it will certainly suggest that something is even more seriously wrong about our musical education than one had supposed, and will bode little good for our musical future.

W.H.M.

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RECITAL OF RUSSIAN SONGS, sung by Oda Slobodskaya (*Decca-Rimington van Wyck,*).

This volume of Russian songs complements the series of French ones made by Maggie Teyte for Rimington van Wyck, and if more limited in mood, is equally superbly sung and hardly less beautiful. Almost all the songs are melancholy and nostalgic, but although Moussorgsky and the barbaric indigenous tradition are unrepresented (perhaps because of the existence of H.M.V.'s fine Moussorgsky song album), the selection gives a fairly comprehensive idea of the great age of 'white' Russian romanticism. There are four songs by Tchaikowsky, two by Rachmaninov, one each by Tcherepnin (*père*) and Cui, and four lieder by Taneiev, a composer almost unknown in this country. With the exception of the pleasant but insipid song of Cui they are all quintessential expressions of nineteenth century Russian art, and in the Tchaikowsky songs in particular it is interesting to observe how the song form may curb the composer's characteristic vices and encourage his virtues. Tchaikowsky's music seems best when it springs from some specific extra-musical function —the inferiority of the symphonies to the ballet music (where the dictates of the physical movements of the dance entail a relatively objective standpoint that keeps his musical intelligence awake and forestalls indulgence in the self-pity of emotional rhetoric) has often been commented on. But the ballet music, though brilliant and charming, is essentially superficial and it is in his writing for the voice that Tchaikowsky finds his deepest and most personal expression. Two at least of four songs are each of more musical worth than the symphonies and concertos lumped together: instead of a dance piece inflated with vulgar (if sometimes effective) melodrama to symphonic proportions we have an exquisitely sensitive line which, the antithesis of Puccinian or Wagnerian hysteria, is almost French and Chausson-like in its delicacy, and a structure which, being dictated by the text, is of exactly the appropriate pretensiousness. Perhaps Russian music owes its monotony to the fact that Russia had no Renaissance (unless Stravinsky is, in music, belatedly it); but one couldn't hope to find a conciser and purer incarnation of it than in the dreamy poignancy of these songs, in which Oda Slobodskaya's phrasing is consummate.

Like the Tchaikowsky, the Rachmaninov songs, although of course lusher and more precious, show all their composer's virtues and none of his faults. They are beautifully written for the voice, again a little Chausson-like in their nostalgic lyrical span, and the piano parts of great distinction—one is particularly grateful. The such as is seldom found in Rachmaninov's rather muddy orchestral writing. For the little known Taneiev songs—more German in manner but again very flexible and sensitive in vocal line, with piano parts of great distinction —one is particularly grateful. The recording of the whole collection is worthy of the singer and the subtly reticent accompanist (Ivor Newton)—wonderfully faithful and of just the right dynamic range.

W.H.M.

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JOHNSON

THE POEMS OF SAMUEL JOHNSON, edited by David Nichol Smith and Edward L. McAdam (*Oxford*, 25/-).

The addition of Johnson's poems to the *Oxford English Texts* is a matter for quiet satisfaction. Everyone, of course, knows that Johnson was a great Man of Letters, but it doesn't follow that the proposition, 'Johnson, after all, was a great English writer', is not one to which those who see its truth as evident are often provoked. In fact, it cannot even be said that the Johnson of general currency is Boswell's Johnson; he is Boswell's Johnson edited in the interests of middle-brow complacency—revised downwards to the level of a good-mixing that, unlike the sociality of the eighteenth century Club, is hostile to serious intellectual standards. For though poor Boswell was quite unintelligent about literature, as he betrays whenever he expresses for our benefit those respectful disagreements with Johnson's judgments, he exhibits in his concern to stress Johnson's intellectual distinction (see, for instance, the recurrent transcriptions of opinions, argued at length, about points of law) a seriousness that has no place in the modern cult of the Great Clubman.

These are the days, indeed, in which you can stock up on Johnson—traits, points, anecdotage, all the legend with its picturesque and humorous properties—without being bothered to read even Boswell. He and Mrs. Thrale might seem to be readable enough, but those little works of mediation which come out from time to time are apparently offered as being more so. Johnson, like his prose, is paid the tribute of appreciative parody. The limitations of such appreciation are, of course, radical: just as those witty prose-parodies cultivate an obtuseness to the unique Johnsonian strength, so the exploitations of Johnson the personality provoke one to the comment that, after all, for Boswell Johnson represented challenging and exacting standards, intellectual and moral—standards far above the level of *l'homme sensuel moyen*.

Johnson was a great prose-writer, and it has been well said that his poetry has the virtues of his prose. This last proposition can count on a general unenthusiastic concurrence. It is worth noting that in the *Oxford Book of Eighteenth Century Verse*, which has over seven hundred pages and the anthologist of which is one of the editors of the volume under review, *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, which forms a considerable proportion of the good poetry produced in the century by poets other than Pope and, though a great poem, is not very long, is represented by four short extracts, occupying four pages in all. But we may take it that to include a poet in the Oxford Standard Texts is to recognize his substantial classical standing.

However, while to see Johnson the poetic classic paid all the honours of exhaustive scholarship must give satisfaction, the satisfaction, as noted above, is quiet. For a perusal of the four hundred pages of this handsome and scrupulously edited volume (a necessary acquisition for all the libraries) yields nothing to add to the familiar

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small body of his verse that deserves currency. *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, the inferior *London*, the Drury Lane *Prologue*, *A Short Song of Congratulation* ('Long-expected one and twenty'), and the stanzas on the death of Levet—what other poem (though no doubt a whole lot of odds and ends could be collected) is there to add to this list?

A large proportion of the volume consists of Latin verse, the presence of which serves to provoke reflections on the difference between Johnson's Latinizing and Milton's. For though (to speak with Johnsonian largeness) no one ever again will read Johnson's Latin, yet that his English would not have been what it is but for his cultivation of Latin is indisputable. He, like Ben Jonson, aims at Latin qualities and effects, yet, contrives to be in his own way, as Ben Jonson is in his, natively and robustly English. They have in common this general difference from Milton, and the particular nature and conditions of this difference in each case might, by a university director of literary studies, be proposed to a student as a profitable matter of inquiry.

Over a hundred pages of the volume are occupied by *Irene*. As one re-reads it one's mind goes back to the characteristic definition: 'A dramatick exhibition is a book recited with concomitants that increase or diminish the effect'. Partly, of course, this is to be taken as expressing (what one sympathizes with) a *literary* bias—a bias, wholly respectable in an age when elevated drama, by Shakespeare or by Home, was an opportunity for Garrick, and declamatory histrionic virtuosity was the highest the theatre had to offer. The assumption that a work of art in words is to be judged as literature seems in any case reasonable, and in not being, where dramatic literature was in question, alive to the complications attendant on the qualifying adjective Johnson, in that age, was not alone. Yet, as one re-reads *Irene*—so patently conceived as a book to be recited, and so patently leaving to the 'concomitants' the impossible task of making it a theatre-piece—one realizes that 'literary bias' misses what is most interesting in Johnson's case. That he has no sense of the theatre, and worse, cannot present or conceive his themes dramatically—these points are obvious. The point one finds oneself making is a matter of noting afresh certain familiar characteristics of his literary habit: his essential bent is undramatic in a sense of the adjective that goes deeper than the interest of the 'dramatic critic'. His good poetry is as radically undramatic as good poetry can be, and the failure in dramatic conception so patent in *Irene* is intimately related to the essential qualities of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*. This is great poetry though, unlike anything that this description readily suggests to modern taste; it is a poetry of statement, exposition and reflection: nothing could be remoter from the Shakespearean use of language—'In this passage is exerted all the force of poetry, that force which calls new powers into being, which embodies sentiment, and animates matter'[1]—than the Johnsonian. Johnson—and in this he is representative of his age—has neither the gift nor the aim of capturing in words, and

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presenting to speak for themselves, significant particularities of sensation, perception and feeling, the significance coming out in complex total effects, which are also left to speak for themselves; he starts with general ideas and general propositions, and enforces them by discussion, comment and illustration. It is by reason of these characteristics that his verse, like that which he found most congenial, may fairly be said to have the virtues of good prose. And it seems reasonable to associate with his radically undramatic habit ('dramatic incapacity' it might be called, if we remember that the positive result of a positive training will have its negative aspect) Johnson's concern for poetic justice, and his inability to appreciate the ways in which works of art *act* their moral judgments: 'He sacrifices virtue to convenience, and is so much more careful to please than to instruct, that he seems to write without any moral purpose'.

The conditions that enable Johnson to give his moral declamation the weight of lived experience and transform his eighteenth-century generalities into that extraordinary kind of concreteness[2]

> Delusive Fortune hears th' incessant call,
> They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall
>
> When first the college rolls receive his name,
> The young enthusiast quits his ease for fame,
> Through all his veins the fever of renown
> Burns from the strong contagion of the gown;
> O'er Bodley's dome his future labours spread,
> And Bacon's mansion trembles o'er his head
>
> Such bribes the rapid Greek o'er Asia whirl'd,
> For such the steady Romans shook the world

—these conditions fail him when he attempts drama. His characters declaim eloquent commonplaces—he cannot make them do anything else, but the dramatic ambition has robbed them of the familiar strength and substance; the great moralist, reduced to making a show of speaking through his *personæ*, is less than himself:

---

[1]From his animadversions on the passage from *Macbeth*. This from the *Preface to Shakespeare*, is relevant too: 'It is incident to him to be now and then entangled with an unwieldy sentiment, which he cannot well express, and will not reject; he struggles with it a while, and if it continues stubborn, comprises it in words such as occur, and leaves it to be disentangled by minds that have more leisure to bestow upon it'.

I propose to discuss in an essay on his criticism this curious way Johnson has of showing, in his descriptions of what he is critically disapproving of, an acuteness of perception that amounts to something like appreciation.

[2]I have discussed it in some detail in *Revaluation*.

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Submissive and prepar'd for each event,
Now let us wait the last Award of Heaven,
Secure of Happiness from Flight or Conquest,
Nor fear the Fair and Learn'd can want Protection.
The mighty Tuscan courts the banish'd Arts
To kind Italia's hospitable Shades;
There shall soft Leisure wing th' excursive Soul,
And Peace propitious smile on fond Desire;
There shall despotick Eloquence resume
Her ancient Empire o'er the yielding Heart;
There Poetry shall tune her sacred Voice,
And wake from Ignorance the Western World.

Irene is all like that. And there too we have the measure of Johnson's blank-verse. He is clearly determined that *his* verse shall not be changed into the 'periods of a declaimer', and that it shall not be said that the audience cannot easily perceive 'where the lines end or begin' (see his remarks on blank-verse in the *Life* of Milton). In couplets, of course, he couldn't have written so dismally. With the absence of rhyme and of the movement of the couplet goes the absence of wit. And without the wit he is without the Johnsonian weight.

F. R. LEAVIS.

RUINS AND WARNINGS

RUINS AND VISIONS, by Stephen Spender (*Faber*, 6/-).
INVITATION AND WARNING, by Henry Treece (*Faber*, 6/-).

Mr. Spender's latest volume of poems is called *Ruins and Visions*, but only half the title is really apposite, I'm afraid. The first part of the book, the 'private poems', comprises a maudlin and trite handling of the old sad story of the deserted lover:

At first you did not love enough
And afterwards you loved too much
And you lacked the confidence to choose
And you have only yourself to blame.

'This happens everywhere at every time', to quote a line from elsewhere in the book, and Mr. Spender has added nothing new to our appreciation of the phenomena of female perfidy.

The rest of the poems, too, are much what one has oft heard already, though one can't add perhaps 'ne'er so well expressed'. Mr. Spender has given us plenty of evidence from which to deduce his inability to use his imagination in a truly poetic way. Like those of so many of our contemporary poets, his imaginative faculties alternate spasmodically between the bathetic 'plain statement' kind of thing and that ghastly modern Homeric metaphor which fills

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one with regressive yearnings for the good old Georgians of yesteryear. This is a particularly ripe example of the latter:

> . . . Not rape their daughters in the coarse embrace
> Of the promiscuous newspapers
> Running with them in headlines through the street.

I suppose the great event of the book is the poem in Part III called *The Fates*. Although Mr. Cyril Connolly writes that this 'thoughtful and dramatic commentary on a conventional mother's values is one of the two or three outstanding poems since the war', I cannot with all the good will in the world see how it is other than just a long and most unoriginal Audenesque 'satire' (I'm afraid the word needs a galaxy of inverted commas to reduce it to the appropriate level)—simply one more shoddy exercise in a very gauche genre, another old sad story, this time of how

> the handsome only son,
> Tanned leader of his village team,
> Is shaken out of the soft folds
> Of silk, spoiled life, as from a curtain.

I do hope the war will kill off this curious spate of tanned leaders of village teams (those that Housman didn't put under the sod): it is sad to see the sophisticated twentieth century sliding back into poetic diction and conventions that vividly recall the worst of the eighteenth century poesy. Consider these two lines, for instance:

> Pretending the thrusting pistons of the passions
> Some acts of kindness wave their handkerchief

('Sheep also pleurises and dropsies know'—Dyer was really much less pretentious).

Mr. Henry Treece, on the other hand, has Imagination by the ton. But Treece (a member of the not-so-new and not-so-apocalyptic New Apocalypse) is a semi-surrealist poet and that kind of Imagination has always been quite unrationed. It strikes me that the semi-surrealist poet occupies a highly privileged position on Parnassus: when he can't go on meaning any longer he can always slip into a stanza or two of non-meaning (which relieves him of the strain genuine poets must occasionally suffer under) and when he can't go on not-meaning any longer he can always indulge in a little meaning (which relieves him of the strain genuine surrealists must occasionally suffer under). Obviously a worth-while line.

Mr. Treece works consistently within a certain fixed medium: that kind of surrealist Bogeyland which is rather more acceptable in painting. His poems are thus compiled from a prescribed set of images—iron, knife, blood, bones, heart, ghosts, miscellaneous Hamletry, God (or god), the fairy-tale paraphernalia of prince, goosegirl, pear-tree, and roses, and so on:

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My tale of horror was the dry-dugged virgin,
The eyeless child with flowers in his claw

Not that Mr. Treece's poetry is by any means entirely divorced from the esesntial kind of 'meaning': what obtains is more a condition of free liaison. And several of these poems build up quite promisingly, but when it comes to the clinch they collapse with a feeble shudder—like *Through the Dark Valley:*

Through the dark valley that I tread
In my hempen robe with staff for sword,
I see death's buds on every bough,
And smell decay in the raven's word.

Beneath each stone I know old lips
Are waiting to mock as I make my way;
Each stream will spawn a thousand snakes
To fondle my thighs as I kneel to pray.

But one thing keeps my head from harm,
Though cross upon my breast should flame,
Or knife should cut me to the heart—
The simple knowledge of a name.

A love poem, perhaps? Or a religious poem? No, just 'a poem', I'm afraid.

These horror-atmospherics are Mr. Treece's strong point; he is very competent with his air of mystery and agonized suspense, he sets his Tale-of-Terror scene very effectively, but the fearful spectres never quite emerge from the wings.

The man in the mask swings a sword of bright stars,
The cloud of his breath is the shroud of the earth.
But the man in the robe from a book reads our fears,
And ticks off the minutes from death until birth.

The woman in white is the mother of hope,
And the twin doves of peace rest on her twin breasts.
But the woman in black, with a knife and a rope,
Is the watcher at gateway, the guardian of ghosts.

This little poem is called *The Characters,* but they are only characters in a wax-works show. Something devastating is always about to happen, some icy hand is always about to descend on our shoulders, but—in the nick of time the poem ends, or gets lost in a welter of indiscriminate apprehensions. Which is perhaps not surprising, seeing how one poem ends with this sinister parenthesis:

(All which was writ me in a dream of rats.)

Nevertheless, of the two volumes I prefer *Invitation and Warning.* Mr. Spender is blatantly bankrupt, whereas Mr. Treece's verse does have a certain poetic wealth about it, even though the coin is mostly counterfeit.

D. J. ENRIGHT.

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